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India, Aus, France to work for rules-based Indo-Pacific

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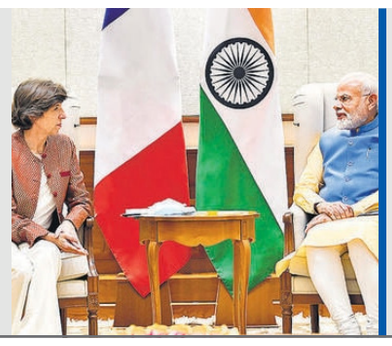

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114 dead, 41K heatstrokes as summer bakes India

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The unrelenting heatwave sweeping large parts of the country has claimed at least 114 lives and left more than 40,984 people grappling with suspected heatstroke between 1 March and 18 June this year, Health Ministry sources said on Thursday.

Uttar Pradesh is the worst-affected having reported 37 deaths followed by Bihar, Rajasthan and Odisha, according to the data compiled under the National Heat-Related Illness and Death Surveillance by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

"The data may not be final submission from states. So the numbers are expected to be higher than this," an official source said.

Health ministry ordered federal and state institutions to ensure "immediate attention" to patients, while hospitals in the capital Delhi, which is also facing a water shortage, were directed make more beds available.

Large parts of India have been in the grip of a heatwave **PHOTO: PTI**

Swathes of northern and eastern India have been in the grip of a heatwave, increasing heatstroke casualties and prompting the Centre to issue advisory to hospitals to set up special units to cater to such patients.

Birds fell from the skies due to extreme heat and hospitals reported an inflow of heat-affected patients as both day and night time temperatures peaked in recent weeks since the start of summer in March.

It stressed on dissemination of early warning of heatwaves issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and said forecast for the next four days should be disseminated to health facilities and vulnerable populations.

The advisory also directed for health facility preparedness for prevention and management of severe HRI and procurement and supply of adequate quantities of ORS (oral rehydration solution) packs, essential medicines, IV fluids, ice-packs, and equipment to support management of volume depletion and electrolyte imbalance, etc.

It also called for ensuring availability of sufficient drinking water at all health facilities, general cooling appliances in waiting and patient treatment area and their functioning, and stressed that cases with suspected heatstroke should be rapidly assessed and actively cooled using standard treatment protocols. —*PTI*

DELHI SEES 22 HEAT-RELATED DEATHS IN 24 HOURS

A total of 22 fatalities due to suspected heat-related illnesses have been recorded at Delhi's RML and Safdarjung and LNJP hospitals in the last 24 hours, officials said on Thursday. Delhi has been battling searing heatwave conditions over the last few days. It got some relief on Thursday morning due to light rain. Hospitals in Delhi have seen a rise in the number of casualties and patients owing to Meanwhile, at the city's main crematorium -- Nigambodh Ghat -- the number of cremations has seen a spike. Officials, however, could not confirm if the deaths were related to heatstrokes. On Wednesday, 142 corpses were brought to the Nigambodh Ghat for cremation, which is nearly 136 percentage points higher than the daily average of 50-60 bodies, Suman Gupta, general secretary of the Nigambodh Ghat Sanchalan Samiti, which manages operations at the crematorium, told PTI. —*PTI*

7-term MP Mahtab appointed pro-term Lok Sabha Speaker

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Seven-term parliamentarian Bhartruhari Mahtab was on Thursday appointed pro-tem Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said. He said Mahtab, a BJP member from Cuttack, was appointed as pro-tem Speaker by President Droupadi Murmu to perform the duties of the Lok Sabha presiding officer till the election of the Speaker. The newly elected members of the 18th Lok Sabha will make oath or affirmation before the pro-tem Speaker, who will be assisted by a panel of chairpersons comprising Congress leader K Suresh, DMK leader T R Baalu, BJP members Radha Mohan Singh and Faggan Singh Kulaste and TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadyay.'—*PTI*

BJP in 'minority', Haryana Cong seeks dissolution of govt

CHANDIGARH, 20 JUNE

A delegation of Haryana Congress met Governor Bandaru Dattatreya here on Thursday, claiming the Nayab Singh Saini's BJP government is in the "minority" and demanding dissolution of the Assembly as well as holding fresh polls. A party delegation headed by Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda met the Governor at the Raj Bhavan here in the evening and submitted a memorandum to him. In the memorandum to Dattatreya, Çongress claimed the government lacks a majority in the House "unless it indulges in horse-trading". He said in the 90-member Assembly, which currently has a strength of 87, BJP has 41 MLAs and has the support of the lone MLA of Haryana Lokhit and Independent Pal Rawat. —*PTI*

Hyd-Kuala Lumpur flight returns after technical snag

HYDERABAD, 20 JUNE

A Hyderabad-Kuala Lumpur Malaysia Airlines flight that took off in the early hours of Thursday from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here made a turn around after the pilot noticed a technical snag in the engine mid-air. According to the airport sources, Flight MH 199 carrying 138 passengers took off at 12.45am but landed back in Hyderabad after some time due to technical reasons. The scheduled departure of the flight was scheduled to take off at 12.15am. The flight landed back at 3.21am at the airport where emergency landing protocols were in place, the sources further said, adding that as of now the aircraft remains grounded. In a statement, Malaysia Airlines said, "No emergency was declared by the operating pilots". —*PTI*

BIG RELIEF FOR AAP AS KEJRIWAL GETS BAIL

Kejri likely to walk out of jail today after paying Rs 1 L bond

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

In a huge relief to embattled Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, a court here on Thursday granted him bail in a money laundering case stemming from the alleged excise scam.

Special Judge Niyay Bindu also declined Enforcement Directorate's prayer to keep in abeyance the bail order for 48 hours to allow the central agency to avail legal remedies like moving a superior court in appeal.

The judge ordered Kejriwal's release on a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh but imposed certain conditions before granting him the relief, including that he will not try to hamper the investigation or influence the witnesses.

The judge had reserved the order earlier during the day after hearing the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which sought to link Kejriwal to the alleged proceeds of crime and co-accused, and the defence that claimed the prosecution has no evidence to nail the AAP leader. Kejriwal's lawyers are likely to submit the bail bond before the court tomorrow, after which he would be released from Tihar jail. One the other hand, the ED is also likely to challenge the bail order before a higher court in the coming days.

Arvind Kejriwal is told not to hamper the investigation **PHOTO: PTI**

However, the grant of regular bail to the AAP national convenor will give his Aam Aadmi Party and its allies a stick to beat the Modi government as according to Section 45 of the stringent Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), bail can be granted only if the judge is prima facie satisfied that the accused has not committed the offence and that he is unlikely to commit any offence while on bail.

- The judge had reserved the order earlier during the day after hearing the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which sought to link Kejriwal to the alleged proceeds of crime and co-accused, and the defence that claimed the prosecution has no evidence to nail the AAP leader.

ED had arrested Kejriwal on 21 March, shortly after Delhi High Court refused to grant him protection from arrest on his petition challenging summonses issued to him.

On 10 May, Supreme Court had granted interim bail to Kejriwal till 1 June to campaign in Lok Sabha elections, saying he will have to surrender and go back to jail on 2 June. —*PTI*

Patna HC cancels 65% quota for OBCs

PATNA, 20 JUNE

In a setback to the Nitish Kumar government in Bihar, the Patna High Court on Thursday struck down its last year's decision to raise quotas for Dalits, backward classes and tribals from 50 to 65 per cent.

A Division Bench headed by Chief Justice K Vinod Chandran passed the order on a bunch of petitions which had opposed the legislation brought by the state government in November 2023.

The quotas were increased following a comprehensive survey of castes which gave a fresh estimate of the population of SCs, STs, OBCs and extremely backward classes (EBCs) in Bihar.

PHOTO: PTI

The Nitish Kumar government on 21 November last year issued gazette notifications for raising the quota for deprived castes from 50 to 65 per cent in state government jobs and educational institutions. "On our plea that the amendments violated Articles 14, 16 and 20 of the Constitution, the court had reserved its judgment in March. Today, the court allowed the petitions," said Ritika Rani, one of the counsels who appeared on behalf of the petitioners.

Another counsel for the petitioners said the government defended the move stressing that it was based on the caste survey. The state last year come out with its report on a caste survey that was conducted after the Centre expressed its inability to undertake a headcount of social groups other than SCs and STs as part of the census. According to the survey, OBCs and EBCs comprised a whopping 63 per cent of the state's total population while SCs and STs, taken together, accounted for more than 21 per cent. —*PTI*

IT'S PAPER LEAK SEASON

NET paper leaked on dark net: MoE

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

University Grants Commission–National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) examination paper was leaked on dark net, leading to its cancellation, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said during a press briefing on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Central Bureau of Investigation registered an FIR into the UGC-NET paper leak case on Thursday against unidentified people on a reference from the Union Education Ministry, officials said.

A high-level committee will look into the paper leak and also probe how National Testing Agency (NTA) functions. "Soon after it was clear that the UGC-NET question paper on dark net matches the original question paper of UGC-NET, we decided to cancel the examination," he said. "We take responsibility, have to rectify system," he said.

"We are forming high-level committee. Students' interest our top priority, forming high-level committee. Recommendations will be expected from the high-level committee to further improve NTA, its structure, functioning, examination process, transparency and data security protocol."

Dharmendra Pradhan **PHOTO: PTI**

The UGC-NET, 2024, exam for the selection of junior research fellows, assistant professors and PhD scholars was conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) on June 18 in two shifts across the country.

The next day, UGC received inputs from the National Cyber Crime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) that the paper was available on the darknet and was allegedly being sold for Rs 5-6 lakh on messaging platforms, sources said. —*PTI*

CONFESSION OF A CRIMINAL

NEET leak accused says he charged Rs 40L per paper

Students protest in New Delhi, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The prime accused of NEET paper leak case Sikander Prasad Yadvendu in his confessional statement admitted to having arranged question papers for four exam aspirants to "prepare" them a day before the test and demanded Rs 40 lakh from each candidate.

Bihar police said four men arrested from the state include aspirant Anurag Yadav, his uncle Sikandar- a junior engineer at Danapur municipal council - and two others - Nitish Kumar and Amit Anand.

Kumar and Anand are known for leaking prestigious exam papers. Yadvendu claimed that he demanded money from each aspirant, including his nephew Yadav, for providing the leaked question paper. Yadvendu, a junior engineer at Bihar, said, "I contacted Kumar and Anand and told them that I have four candidates—Ayush Kumar, Yadav, Abhishek Kumar, and Shivnandan Kumar."

Yadvendu claimed that Kumar and Anand charged Rs 32 lakh per candidate and assured him of providing the question paper in advance. On 4 May, all four candidates were called to a guest house where Kumar and Anand helped them "prepare" using the leaked paper, Yadvendu claimed. The candidates later confessed that the same questions appeared in the actual exam on 5 May. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

SC NOTICE TO NTA, CENTRE ON SCRAPPING NEET

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Supreme Court on Thursday sought responses from the Centre, the National Testing Agency (NTA) and others on a slew of petitions, including those seeking scrapping of the NEET-UG 2024 exam and a court-monitored probe, amid mounting outrage over alleged irregularities in conducting the all-India medical entrance test.

The apex court also stayed further proceedings on similar pleas pending before different high courts. The top court, however, made it clear that it will not stay the counselling process.

A vacation bench of Justices Vikram Nath and SVN Bhatti issued notices to the parties seeking their responses on four separate pleas filed by the NTA seeking transfer of some pending petitions, including those claiming paper leak, from high courts to the apex court. —*PTI*

MHA DENIES VISA

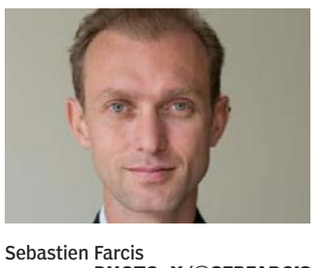
French scribe says 'forced to leave' India

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

French journalist Sebastien Farcis on Thursday was "forced to leave" India after the Union Home Ministry refused to renew his permit even though he has worked here for over 13 years.

He is the second French journalist, following Vanessa Dougnac in February, to be forced to leave India after their legal permission to work in the country was revoked.

At least five foreign correspondents have been banned from working as journalists in less than two year



Sebastien Farcis **PHOTO: X/@SEBFARCIS**

Farcis, a South Asia correspondent for Radio France Internationale, Radio France, Liberation and the Swiss and Belgian public radios, who has lived in India for 13 years and is married to an Indian woman

Farcis said he had been working in India as a journalist since 2011 and had obtained all the necessary visas and accreditations.

"On several occasions, the MHA even granted me permits to report from border areas," he said in a statement posted on X.

Farcis, said the Ministry of Home Affairs had notified the denial on 7 March this year, thus not allowing him to cover Lok Sabha elections that saw Narendra Modi return to power for a third time.

"This work ban comes as a big shock: it was communicated to me on the eve of the Indian general elections, the largest democratic elections in the world, which I was hence forbidden to cover. This appeared to me as incomprehensible censorship," Farcis wrote.

In February, French journalist Vanessa Dougnac left India after the government revoked her Overseas Citizen of India card. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

HC junks Iraqi's plea to enter India, cites visa violations

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

High Court blocked efforts by an Iraqi to gain entry into India, citing visa violations and his blacklisted status. Sagad Kareem Ismael allegedly altered the spelling of his name, tampered with his visa sticker, and made questionable claims of needing medical treatment to circumvent his blacklisted status for overstaying during previous visits. The 33-year-old from Baghdad had filed a petition through his "special power of attorney holder", Muntandher Ahmed. He sought a directive to Ministry of External Affairs to grant him a visa for medical treatment as per his February 2024 application. Justice M Nagaprasanna, noting Ismael's repeated attempts to re-enter India despite his blacklisted status for overstaying as "dubious." *—PTI*

Man kills 3-year-old nephew, arrested

CHIKKABALLAPURA, 20 JUNE

The Batlahalli police have arrested one Ranjith for allegedly killing his 3-year-old nephew. The incident took place on Wednesday evening in Nimmakayalahalli village of Chintamani taluk. Police said, the accused Ranjith confessed to killing his nephew out of resentment towards his sister-in-law, Shirish. Ranjith, an engineering graduate, was unemployed, which often to led to frequent taunts from his sister-in-law. In a fit of rage, Ranjith assaulted Shirish and later took the child to a nearby dilapidated house. There, he struck the child with a stone and subsequently slashed his throat with a knife, police said. Chikkaballapur Superintendent of Police DL Nagesh, along with Batlahalli police, visited the crime scene. *—Salar News*

Sharan Prakash demands CBI probe into NEET scam

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Medical Education Minister Sharan Prakash Patil called for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into alleged irregularities in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). He claimed the NEET, under the NDA government, is a "major scam". Patil urged the Supreme Court to intervene. He highlighted the anxieties of the 24 lakh students who took NEET and argued that the apex court had previously issued directives for action on the matter. The Minister criticised the central government's cancellation of National Eligibility Test (NET) on the eve of the exam, calling it a blow to students' careers. Patil also questioned the central government's inaction. *—Salar News*

2 pilgrims from B'luru die due to heat during Hajj

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Two pilgrims from Bengaluru are among the hundreds of people who died during this year's Hajj in Saudi Arabia, as the faithful faced intense high temperatures at Islamic holy sites in the desert kingdom, officials said on Thursday. The deceased are Kouser Rukhsana, 69, and Abdul Ansari, 54, residents of RT Nagar and Frazer Town. Due to the intense heatwave, the two pilgrims from Bengaluru died of dehydration and sunstroke. Speaking to Salar News, S Sarfaraz Khan, Executive Officer of the Karnataka State Hajj Committee, said that Saudi authorities had advised pilgrims to avoid venturing out in the afternoon sun due to the extreme heat. "The tragedy occurred when the pilgrims were reportedly taking part in the Ramy al-jamarat (stoning of the devil) ritual at Mina valley," he said. *—Salar News*

Karnataka okays Centre's mining plan in Kolar

Mining will be done in 13 tailing dumps attached to BGML

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

BGML, till 2022-23, had to pay Rs 75,24,88,025 as arrears to State
PHOTO: FREEPIK

- The Cabinet authorised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to decide on the dates for holding the monsoon session of the state legislature.

Cabinet gave its approval to the Centre's proposal on continuation of mining in 13 tailing dumps attached to Bharat Gold Mines Limited (BGML) in Kolar. Meanwhile, it sought to transfer 2,330 acres of the defunct company for its proposed industrial township there.

Further noting that BGML, till 2022-23, had to pay Rs 75,24,88,025 as arrears to Karnataka, he said: "We will be requesting the Government of India to pay, or else, as we have asked them for the land, they may ask us to consider the amount for the land in kind -- like exchange."

Meanwhile, the Cabinet authorised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to decide on the dates for holding the monsoon session of the state legislature.

The government has also mandated the placing portraits of BR Ambedkar along with Mahatma Gandhi during celebration of Constitution Day, Independence Day and Republic Day.

Other Cabinet decisions include administrative approval for the construction of a new outpatient block at the KR Hospital campus in Mysuru at an estimated cost of Rs 75 crore, free power and water facilities to all 46,829 government schools and 1,234 PU colleges at an estimated cost of Rs 29.19 crore, and Rs 2.37 crore for implementation of personality development programme for students at residential schools under social welfare development department in association with Rotary International-Bengaluru.

The Cabinet has also given its consent to take the help of women self-help groups in recovery of property tax and water bill dues in different urban local bodies. It was also decided to give approval for declaring 33 units of the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement as "special police stations", and they will get the status of police stations in dealing with SC/ST atrocities cases.

The Cabinet authorised the Chief Minister to form a sub-committee regarding issues faced by the Universities, including staff shortage.

"When the Cabinet discussed giving Rs 279 crore for six universities, concerns were raised about vacancies in old established universities, and also regarding salary and pension issues there, along development and technology import. The Cabinet has requested the Chief Minister to constitute a cabinet sub-committee to find solutions for them," he said.

Approval was also given for 7,110 km of rural roads at an estimated cost of Rs 5,190 crore, under the 'Pragati Path' scheme with external assistance. *—PTI*

'ROLL IT BACK'

BJP Karnataka President BY Vijayendra protests with party leaders in Bengaluru on Thursday
PHOTO: PTI

BJP holds protest in State over hike in fuel prices

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

BJP on Thursday held "Cycle Jatha" here, as part of its statewide protest against Congress government's decision to hike petrol and diesel prices.

BJP workers and leaders led by State President BY Vijayendra sought rode bicycles from the party's State office 'Jagannath Bhavan' to 'Vidhana Soudha'.

However, the police stopped the protesters mid-way, detained Vijayendra and others and whisked them away in a bus. Last week the government hiked sales tax on fuel making petrol and diesel costlier by Rs 3 and Rs 3.5 per litre.

Speaking to reporters, Vijayendra urged the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to roll it back. "In Bengaluru by organising Cycle Jatha, the party has tried to warn the State government, but this adamant government is not even thinking about rolling back price hike. Siddaramaiah is citing higher prices in neighbouring states, but our State is in distress, farmers are in distress due to drought, in such a situation the decision to put more burden on the common man is an unpardonable sin," he said.

Vijayendra said that Ministers have also said that bus fare will also be hiked, and water tariffs increased in Bengaluru in the future. "This government has become a curse to the people of the state." Reacting to Home Minister G Parameshwara's reported indirect caution to BJP that the police may resort to caning to disperse anyone who tries to cause inconvenience to the public in the name of protests, he called it "height of foolishness." "BJP will not fear for lathis and will raise their voice for the sake of people and farmers. Parameshwara is speaking out of arrogance of power," he said. *—PTI*

Court extends police custody of actor Darshan, 3 others

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Darshan has confessed to have given Rs 30 lakh to another accused Pradosh for the disposal of the body
PHOTO: ANI

A Bengaluru court on Thursday extended police custody of Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa and three other accused in the Renukaswamy murder case by two days.

Dhanaraj, Vinay and Pradosh are the other three whose police custody was extended.

Thirteen other accused, including the actor's friend Pavithra Gowda, were remanded to 14 days' judicial custody.

A total of 17 people are accused in the murder case.

All the accused were produced before Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Judge Vishwanath C Goudar as their police custody ended on Thursday.

According to police sources, Renukaswamy, a fan of the actor, had sent obscene messages to Gowda, which enraged Darshan, allegedly leading to his murder. His body was found near a storm-water drain next to an apartment in Sumanahalli here on 9 June 9.

Darshan has confessed to have given Rs 30 lakh to another accused Pradosh for the disposal of the body and to ensure that "his name does not come out anywhere," police have claimed.

The amount has been recovered from Pradosh's residence, police sources said.

According to the post-mortem report, Renukaswamy's death was caused due to shock and haemorrhage as a result of multiple blunt injuries sustained. "Viscera samples have been sent to the Forensic Science Laboratory for further analysis," he said. *—PTI*

BBMP issues notice to owner of shed where murder took place

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has issued a notice to the owner of Pattanagere shed K Jayanna, where actor Darshan Thoogudeepa's fan Renukaswamy was allegedly murdered before being thrown into a drain. The body was found next to an apartment complex in Summanahalli. The accused number 10 in the murder case V Vinay is the nephew of Jayanna. He, with others, was allegedly present at the shed. *—Salar News*

People living here should learn Kannada, says CM

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Thursday urged people to take pride in speaking their mother tongue and said it is the responsibility of every Kannadiga to protect Kannada, land and water.

Both said that people living in State should learn Kannada and stressed the need to create a "Kannada atmosphere".

Speaking after performing 'bhoomi pooja' for a 25-feet-tall bronze statue of Nada Devi Bhuvaneshwari on the premises of Vidhana Soudha here, he said speaking our mother tongue should be a matter of pride.

"A vow must be made that no language other than Kannada is spoken in the state. Kannadigas are generous. That is why there is an environment in Karnataka where even those who speak other languages can live without learning Kannada. The same situation cannot be seen in Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Kerala. They speak only in their mother tongue," he pointed out.

Calling on Kannadigas to speak in their mother tongue, Siddaramaiah said there is no need to feel inferior about it.

Asking people living in Karnataka to learn Kannada, he said, "For that, all the people living here should learn Kannada. We cannot remain silent like that. Kannadigas are not insolents. But love for Kannada should be developed." *—PTI*

Villagers offer ₹1 lakh to end fly menace

DAVANGERE, 20 JUNE

Hebbalu, a village known for its educated population and prosperous farms, is facing a persistent problem – flies. Every monsoon season, the village endures a severe fly infestation for months, causing immense distress to residents.

This year, frustrated by the flies causing illness and economic hardship, the villagers have announced a reward of Rs 1 lakh for anyone who can solve the problem.

The problem started in 2914 and the source of the flies is believed to be the numerous chicken farms operating near Hebbalu for decades. The village is located adjacent to Pune-Bangalore National Highway in Davangere. Villagers allege the farm owners, mostly from Andhra Pradesh, are influential and refuse to follow a proper waste management practices.

Despite appeals to local authorities over the years, no effective action has been taken. With the onset of the rainy season, the situation in Hebbalu has become unbearable once again.

The constant presence of flies has led to widespread illness among residents, impacting their health, livelihood, and overall well-being.

Deputy Commissioner MV Venkatesh has assured the community that a meeting will be held to address the issue. Villagers urge the district administration to take serious action and implement a lasting solution. *—Salar News*

Residents gather at the location where a hotel collapsed
PHOTO: SALAR

Hotel collapse in Kodagu traps several, 9 rescued

MADIKERI, 20 JUNE

- Nine people trapped under the debris were rescued successfully during a joint operation by fire and emergency services personnel, police and the NDRF team

An Ambur Biryani Hotel collapsed in Gonikoppal, Kodagu district, on Thursday, trapping several people.

Nine people trapped under the debris were rescued successfully during a joint operation by fire and emergency services personnel, police and the National Disaster Management Team (NDRF) team.

Two of them have suffered injuries. The rescued included the hotel owner Thirumurugan, his wife Alamelu, their son Narayan, and a worker Malinga. A customer, Madhu, who was dining at the restaurant, suffered a leg fracture and was admitted to Gonikoppali Hospital.

Another customer, Bhaira, who sustained a head injury, was rushed to Mysore Hospital. Police officials stated that the building, over 80 years old, likely collapsed due to weak foundation. *—Salar News*

2 SHOT DEAD IN HASSAN, COPS SUSPECT MURDER-SUICIDE

HASSAN, 20 JUNE

Two people were found dead with bullet injuries in this district headquarters town on Thursday, police said.

The police suspected it to be a "case of murder and suicide."

According to Hassan Superintendent of Police Mohammad Sujeetha MS, the two people had come to Hoysala Nagar here in a car and were seen having heated exchanges.

One person was found dead outside the car, and the other inside the vehicle.

The deceased are Sharafat Ali from Hassan and Asif from Bengaluru, sources said. *—PTI*

END OF AN ERA

Ex-Indian cricketer David jumps to death in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Former India pacer David Johnson died on Thursday after he allegedly jumped to death from his fourth-floor apartment balcony in Bengaluru. The 52-year-old pacer had allegedly battled depression alongside health issues.

He lived in SLV Paradise apartment at Kanakashree Layout in Kothanur.

According to his neighbours, Johnson was rushed to Crescent Hospital but was declared dead on arrival. Johnson was discharged from a hospital three days ago after undergoing treatment. No suicide note was recovered and no foul play was suspected, police said. However, a senior police official said Johnson had been visiting a de-addiction centre in the City.

Sachin Tendulkar led the tributes describing him as someone who was 'full of life' and 'never gave up on the field'.

David Johnson
PHOTO: SALAR

"We played together since our Under-19 days and even the Ranji Trophy for Karnataka. He could take on any odds, be it the opposition on the field or in life. He was up for all the good things in life," former Karnataka batsman and Ranji trophy player Fazal Khaleel told **Salar News**.

Sports journalist and cricket writer Joseph Hoover told **Salar News**, "We have lost a good human being and a fine cricketer. Unfortunately, he stretched it and went beyond his means," he said.

Johnson's journey began in 1996, making his Test debut against Australia. He toured South Africa in 1997, playing his last match in Durban. He played for Karnataka until 2002. He was part of a formidable pace attack in the 1990s alongside Javagal Srinath, Venkatesh Prasad, Dodda Ganesh and Anil Kumble.

His international career was short, ending after two Tests with three wickets. Johnson took 125 First-Class wickets and 41 List-A scalps from 39 matches. Reportedly, his keen interest in horse racing as an owner and aficionado often landed him in financial turmoil. Johnson had to find some odd jobs to make both ends meet, and he also relocated to Chennai for better tidings at one point.

If you need emotional support, please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAvHAI at 080-25497777. *—Salar News*

B'LURU POLICE SERVES NOTICE TO NOIDA YOUTUBER

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Days after an FIR was filed against Noida-based social media influencer Ajeet Bharti for allegedly spreading false news about the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, Bengaluru Police on Thursday served him a notice to join the probe, official sources said. The case was registered against him based on a complaint by the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee.

On 13 June, Bharti posted a video on his official X handle, wherein he falsely claimed that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had stated in his speeches that he intends to bring back the Babri Masjid in place of the Ram Mandir. "This is a blatant lie and a gross misrepresentation of Gandhi's statements," the complainant said.

"A three-member police team from Bengaluru went to Bharti's residence in Noida to serve him the notice to join the probe in connection with the case registered against him," a police source said here. In his complaint, Advocate BK Bopanna alleged that the "recent actions" of Bharti, a "self-proclaimed journalist and author", have resulted in spreading false information and fabricated propaganda, thereby creating enmity and discord among different religious communities. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Prez turns 66, celebrates with specially-abled

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi wished President Droupadi Murmu a long and healthy life on her 66th birthday on Thursday. Murmu started her day by visiting the Lord Jagannath temple in Delhi and prayed for the welfare of all citizens. "Jai Jagannath! Today I visited the Jagannath temple in Delhi and prayed for the welfare of all countrymen and also (wished) that our country continues to set new standards of progress," the president's office said on X. Murmu was born on 20 June, 1958 at Uparbeda village in Odisha's Mayurbhanj. She was sworn in as the 15th President of India on 25 July, 2022. *—PTI*

J&K workers forced to be part of yoga event: Mehbooba

SRINAGAR, 20 JUNE

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Thursday criticised the Jammu and Kashmir administration for allegedly forcing employees, including pregnant women, to report for the International Yoga Day event at odd hours, saying an occasion for celebration has filled people with dread. However, the government denied the charges and said all the participants volunteered to take part in the event and no employee was compelled to join it against their will. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the main International Yoga Day (IYD) celebrations this year at an event at SKICC here. "An occasion for celebration has become one that fills people with dread. A day before International Yoga Day, all govt employees along with school children have been ordered to show up at different venues at ungodly hours. *—PTI*

Surama Padhy elected as Odisha Assembly Speaker

BHUBANESWAR, 20 JUNE

Senior BJP leader Surama Padhy was on Thursday elected unopposed as the Speaker of the Odisha Assembly. Padhy, a two-time MLA elected from the Ranpur Assembly segment in Nayagarh district was the lone candidate for the post. She was elected unopposed as there was no other candidate in the fray. Pro-tem Speaker RP Swain announced her election and handed over the charge to her in the special session of the Assembly. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, deputy chief ministers - KV Singh Deo, Pravati Parida, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik and other members of the House greeted the new Speaker. *—PTI*

Names of 12K voters missing in Mumbai: Parab

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Anil Parab, who is party's candidate for the Mumbai Graduates' constituency of the Maharashtra legislative council, on Thursday alleged the names of around 10,000 to 12,000 voters enrolled by his party do not figure in the final list. Addressing a press conference here, he alleged political interference in the functioning of the Election Commission. He also claimed that the names enrolled by the rival parties have been included in the list. Parab is a candidate from the Mumbai Graduates' constituency, a seat the undivided Shiv Sena won five times in the past. As per the Election Commission's records, 1,20,771 voters are eligible to vote in the Mumbai Graduates' constituency that will go to polls on 26 June. *—PTI*

NEET, NET: Students rage, Oppn raps govt

Students detained; Bihar DyCM links RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav to NEET paper leak row

A policewoman detains Indian Youth Congress member during a protest over the NEET-UG and UGC-NET row; Students protest in New Delhi ; SFI members burn an effigy in Agartala, Tripura *PHOTOS: PTI/ANI*

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The outcry against alleged irregularities in the medical entrance exam NEET grew louder on Thursday with several student groups staging protests and opposition attacking the government saying the paper leaks are expansion of the Vyapam scam and future of candidates who appeared in these exams is being destroyed.

The cancellation of UGC-NET, amid the raging row over NEET, led to questions being raised over National Testing Agency's (NTA) capability to conduct exams of larger magnitude.

The Ministry of Education said it is waiting for a report of Bihar Police's Economic Offences Unit on alleged irregularities in conduct of NEET in Patna and will take further action on basis of that. The Ministry also summoned NTA DG Subodh Kumar Singh to discuss the issue further.

The ministry on Wednesday cancelled UGC-NET conducted by the NTA following inputs that the integrity of the examination may have been compromised.

> **It was being said Prime Minister Modi stopped the Ukraine-Russia War and Israel-Gaza war, but he is either not able to stop exam paper leaks or doesn't want to**
>
> -Rahul Gandhi, Congress MP

More than two dozen students from different universities and members of various students' groups were detained on Thursday while they were protesting against the cancellation of the UGC-NET examination and irregularities in the NEET.

The students were detained from outside the Ministry of Education as well as the Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's residence here in central Delhi.

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha claimed the arrested prime accused in the NEET "paper leak" is linked to officials associated with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav, and demanded an investigation into it.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan urged Centre to take immediate steps to resolve the crisis in the NTA, saying its "repeated incompetence" in conducting exams such as NEET and the UGC-NET cannot be accepted.

TMC MP Saket Gokhale said the examination process in the country has crashed and the lives of students are being destroyed. He accused the NTA of being complicit.

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Manoj Jha said the NEET exam should also be cancelled.

"You had to scrap NET and you must scrap NEET now as there is ample proof that this examination was compromised. And it is time to acknowledge that the NTA is a fraud," he said. *—PTI*

HC dismisses plea for NEET re-examination

New Delhi, 20 June

The Delhi High Court has dismissed a petition by three medical aspirants seeking permission to appear for NEET UG, 2024 re-test on 23 June on the ground of loss of time, holding there was no merit or substance in their petition. The petitioners claimed they suffered because of loss of time during the exam held on 5 May for which they were neither compensated with extra time nor awarded any grace marks. However, the High Court noted that they were already allowed extra time at the examination centre as the question paper given to them initially had to be replaced. The petition was filed by four NEET-UG aspirants. *—PTI*

EC gets pleas for EVM verifications in 8 LS seats in 6 states

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

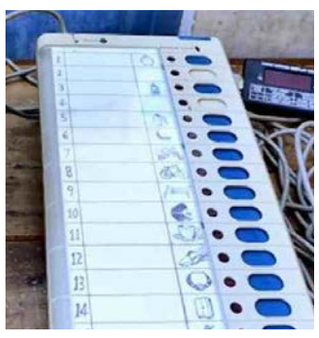


PHOTO: PTI

The Election Commission has received eight applications from aggrieved candidates, including those from the BJP and the Congress, for verification of tampering or modification in micro-controller chips embedded in the EVMs post declaration of Lok Sabha election results on 4 June.

According to the EC, eight parliamentary seats spread across six states are involved. The total number of polling stations for which verification has been sought is 92.

Terming the suspicion of manipulation of the electronic voting machines "unfounded", the Supreme Court had on 26 April rejected the demand for reverting to the old paper ballot system.

But at the same time, the top court had opened a window for the aggrieved unsuccessful candidates securing second and third places in the poll results and allowed them to seek verification of micro-controller chips embedded in five per cent EVMs per assembly constituency on a written request upon the payment of a fee to the poll panel.

BJP's Ahmednagar (Maharashtra) candidate Sujay Vikhe-Patil has sought verification of the machines from 40 polling stations.

Vikhe-Patil had lost to Nilesh Lanke of NCP (Sharad Pawar) faction.

Candidates who come second or third and seek verification of the EVMs will have to pay Rs 47,200 per EVM set, according to the standard operating procedure issued by the EC on 1 June. *—PTI*

PM hints at J&K statehood, says Assembly elections soon

SRINAGAR, 20 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi being presented a memento by Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha in Srinagar on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said "time is not far" when the people of Jammu and Kashmir will elect a new government in assembly polls and indicated that statehood will be resorted soon to the union territory.

Participating in the 'Empowering Youth, Transforming J&K' event at Sher-i-Kashmir International Conference Centre (SKICC) in Srinagar here, the Prime Minister said the government has taken the recent terror attacks very seriously and will not hesitate to teach a lesson to the enemies of Jammu and Kashmir.

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir elect their representatives at the local level, through them you find ways to solve problems, what can be better than this? Therefore, now the preparations for the Assembly elections have also started. The time is not far when you will elect the new government of Jammu and Kashmir with your votes. That day will also come soon, when Jammu and Kashmir will once again make its future better as a state," he said.

The BJP-led government scrapped Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019 and bifurcated the state into two union territories. There have been demands from political parties for early assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir and restoration of statehood.

Modi said that 84 major developmental projects valued at more than Rs 1,500 crore were inaugurated on Thursday.

"Projects related to the agriculture sector worth Rs 1800 crore were inaugurated. New national highways and expressways are being constructed here. Every Indian feels proud when they see pictures of the world's highest bridge on the river Chenab," he said.

"The whole world is witnessing the changes in Kashmir Valley...Humara Kashmir kitna aage badh gaya hai'... You will see that the International Yoga Day celebration will also become an attraction for tourists," he added. *—PTI*

BANGLADESH PM TO BEGIN STATE VISIT TODAY

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will pay a two-day state visit to India beginning Friday to further expand the already close ties between the two countries.

It will be the first incoming bilateral state visit by a foreign leader after the formation of the new government in India following the Lok Sabha elections.

Hasina was among seven top leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region who attended the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union council of ministers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on 9 June.

Modi and Hasina are scheduled to hold wide-ranging talks on Saturday during which both sides are likely to firm up a raft of agreements providing for cooperation in several sectors.

"At the invitation of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina will pay a state visit to India on 21 and 22 June," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. *—PTI*

YUSUF PATHAN MOVES GUJ HC AGAINST ENCROACHMENT NOTICE BY MUNICIPALITY

AHMEDABAD, 20 JUNE

Former India cricketer and newly-elected Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP Yusuf Pathan on Thursday approached the Gujarat High Court against a notice issued by the Vadodara civic body, asking him to remove the alleged encroachment on a piece of land owned by it in the city.

In his plea, Pathan said since the matter is over 10-years-old now and the plot in question is also in his possession, the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) should have given him a chance by issuing a showcause notice instead of a notice that asked him to "clear the encroachment" and free the VMC-owned plot. He also argued that the Gujarat government, which rejected the VMC's proposal to sell the land to Pathan in 2014, cannot deny the sale of land because i t belonged to the civic body and not the state government. *—PTI*

I am insecure with Kolkata Police, says WB Guv

KOLKATA, 20 JUNE

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose on Thursday said that he was apprehending a threat to his security because of the presence of the current contingent of Kolkata Police posted at Raj Bhavan here.

His statement came days after he ordered the police personnel to vacate the Raj Bhavan premises. They, however, are still on duty in the Governor House.

"I have reasons to believe that the presence of the current officer-in-charge and his team is a threat to my personal security," Bose told PTI.

"I have informed Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee that I am insecure with Kolkata Police in Raj Bhavan, but there was no action," he said.

Sources in the Governor House said Bose has complained to the state government that there has been constant snooping by the police personnel posted in Raj Bhavan and he could sense that they were doing it on the insistence of "influencers" from outside. "The policemen

Ananda Bose *PHOTO: PTI*

posted here have been snooping on my movements as well as many of my officers. Their acts are with the tacit support of their political masters in government. This is violative of the Constitution," Bose said. He has brought the matter to the notice of Banerjee from time to time but no action has been taken by her. "None of these can happen without the knowledge of the highest authorities in the police department which is under the Home department," he asserted. Bose claimed he had information about the "misdeeds" of the police contingent posted in Raj Bhavan.

"They have been working as sleuths for somebody. That somebody I do not want to name now," the governor said. *—PTI*

INDIA GRANTS $6M

EAM, Lanka commission Maritime Centre

COLOMBO, 20 JUNE

Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets with Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Colombo on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Thursday held wide-ranging talks with Sri Lanka's top leadership, including President Ranil Wickremesinghe, and jointly commissioned with him the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre built with a USD 6 million grant from India, as New Delhi stepped up bilateral cooperation with its time-tested neighbour.

Jaishankar, who met Wickremesinghe at the President's House here, said he conveyed the warm greetings of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and discussed the way forward for the bilateral cooperation, especially in power, energy, connectivity, port infrastructure, aviation, digital, health, food security, education and tourism sectors.

Following the meeting, Jaishankar joined Wickremesinghe in virtually handing over 48 houses, 24 each in Colombo and Trincomalee, built under the Model Village Housing Project and 106 houses in three up-country estates, built under Phase III of the Indian Housing Project, with funding from India, said a statement issued by the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry.

This includes a centre at Navy Headquarters in Colombo, a sub-centre in Hambantota, the location of the Chinese-funded port.

The two leaders focused on initiatives aimed at enhancing energy connectivity and developing the renewable energy sector. *—PTI*

Atishi starts hunger strike today against water woes

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Delhi Water Minister Atishi said she will sit on an indefinite hunger strike at Bhogal in south Delhi from Friday noon to press on her demand for getting 100 million gallons of water per day from Haryana.

At a press conference, Atishi said she will first visit Rajghat at 11 am on Friday to pay tributes to Mahatma Gandhi whose path of Satyagraha was the only option available as no water was provided to Delhi.

"Delhi requires 1,005 MGD of water out of which 613 MGD comes from Haryana. Since the last two weeks, Haryana has reduced this to 513 MGD. The 100 MGD less water has caused around 28 lakh people in the city to crave for every drop of water," she said.

She claimed that Haryana has refused to release water and her letter to the Prime Minister also did not help so she is forced to sit on the hunger strike for the rightful share of Delhi's water and 28 lakh affected people in the city.

The total water supply in Delhi is 1005 MGD (million gallons per day) out of which 60 per cent (613 MGD) through Munak canal and Wazirabad barrage, 25 percent (257 MGD) from UP and 15 percent (135 MGD) from ground water, Delhi government sources said.

Delhi is facing an unprecedented heatwave as a result the demand for water has increased. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Activists extend support to Medha Patkar's agitation

DHAR, 20 JUNE

People from many states and a farmers' body have backed activist Medha Patkar who has been agitating in Madhya Pradesh demanding rehabilitation of those affected in the state by the Sardar Sarovar Project on Narmada River in neighbouring Gujarat. Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Patkar has been protesting at Kheda Basti in Chikhalda village, about 125 km from the district headquarters, for the past six days over implementation of the Supreme Court's directions concerning rehabilitation of the displaced persons. Activist Prafulla Samantara from Odisha and others from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and former MLA and Samyukta Kisan Morcha leader Dr Suneelam reached Kheda Basti to support Patkar's ongoing agitation. *—PTI*

Diphtheria patient dies in Odisha, toll rises to 6

BHUBANESWAR, 20 JUNE

The diphtheria death toll in Odisha rose to six with one more patient undergoing treatment at MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur succumbing to the disease, an official said on Thursday. A 10-year-old boy from Koraput district, who was undergoing treatment at the medical college died on Wednesday night, said Suchitra Dash, principal-cum superintendent of the medical college and hospital. Another three diphtheria patients are still under treatment at the medical college, he said. Earlier five people have died due to diphtheria in Rayagada district over the last one week. Of them, four died at home and one in the hospital, health officials said. *—PTI*

Dead cattle found MP, smuggling suspected

SEONI, 20 JUNE

Carcasses of several cows and oxen have been found in a river and a forest in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district, with officials suspecting that cattle smugglers killed the bovine animals to escape police action. The district collector and superintendent of police visited the spots after the carcasses were discovered in the Vainganga river and Kakartala forest on Wednesday-Thursday, a senior official said. Arrangements are being made for burying the dead animals after post-mortem and other paperwork. "Bodies of 18 cows with necks slit were found in the Vainganga river near Pindrai village, while carcasses of 28 cows and oxen were found in the Kakartala forest area under Dhuma police station limits," Seoni SP Rakesh Kumar Singh told PTI. *—PTI*

SC stays criminal action against MDs of IREO Group

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The Supreme Court has stayed criminal proceedings against IREO Group Managing Director Lalit Goyal and Oberoi Realty Limited Chairman and Managing Director Vikas Oberoi over allegations of cheating, criminal breach of trust and forgery. A vacation bench of Justices PV Sanjay Kumar and Augustine George Masih issued notice to the Haryana government on a plea filed against an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. "The question as to whether the filing of the second complaint would amount to an abuse of process and as to whether the complainant approached the court with unclean hands requires further examination. Issue notice to the respondents ...In the meanwhile, there shall be stay of further proceedings in relation to FIR," the bench said. *—PTI*

India, Aus, France to work for rules-based Indo-Pacific

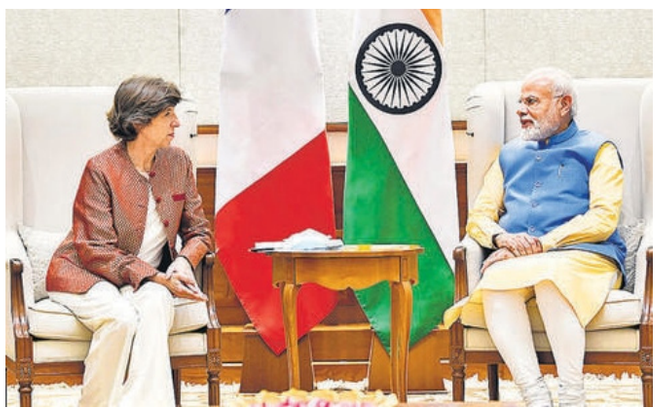
Maritime safety security, environmental cooperation were on agenda

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

India, Australia and France have vowed to jointly work towards a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific amid China's growing muscle-flexing in the region.

The overall situation in the Indo-Pacific came up for detailed deliberations at the third 'India-France-Australia trilateral focal points' meeting that took place in Delhi on Wednesday. "The three sides reviewed the progress made under the three pillars of trilateral cooperation: maritime safety and security, marine and environmental cooperation, and multilateral engagement," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

It said the meeting identified new proposals for furthering the trilateral cooperation, including under the framework of the Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) mechanisms. "India, Australia and France reaffirmed their commitment to advancing their shared values and working together towards a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific," the MEA said in a statement.



The IPOI is an open, inclusive, non-treaty based, global initiative that was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2019 *PHOTO: PTI*

The IPOI is an open, inclusive, non-treaty based, global initiative that was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 14th East Asia Summit in November 2019 to promote collaborative efforts among like-minded nations to better manage, conserve and secure the Indo-Pacific maritime domain. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is an inter-governmental organisation aimed at strengthening regional cooperation.

The Indian side at the trilateral was led by Piyush Srivastava, joint secretary (Europe West) and Paramita Tripathi, joint secretary (Oceania and Indo-Pacific) at the MEA. The French side was headed by BenoÃ®t GuidÃ©e, Director (Asia and Oceania) in French foreign ministry.

The Australian delegation was led by Sarah Storey, a first assistant secretary at Australian foreign ministry's South and Central Asia Division.

—PTI

AERIAL VIEW

Indian Railway conducts trial run on the world's highest railway bridge over Chenab River in Reasi on Thursday. This bridge was constructed 359 metres above the river in Jammu and Kashmir and is around 35 metres taller than the Eiffel Tower *PHOTO: PTI*

ED raids Delhi, Mumbai, Nagpur in over ₹20,000 crore fraud case

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday searched about 35 premises in Delhi-NCR, Mumbai and Nagpur as part of a money laundering probe against a company and its promoters accused of perpetrating an alleged bank loan fraud of more than Rs 20,000 crore, official sources said.

The raids are being carried out on the Amtek Group and its directors, including Arvind Dham, Gautam Malhotra and others. About 35 business and residential premises in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Mumbai and Nagpur are being raided since this morning, the sources said.

The probe stems from a CBI FIR against a group entity of Amtek-- ACIL Limited-- on allegations of a bank fraud of more than Rs 20,000 crore in a number of listed companies which were finally taken over in NCLT proceedings at nominal price leaving the consortium of banks with nominal recovery, they said.

PHOTO: PTI

The Supreme Court too had sought an ED probe, the sources said. This, as per the ED, led to a loss of about Rs 10,000-Rs 15,000 crore to the exchequer, the sources said. The ED believes that loan funds were "siphoned off" to invest in real estate, foreign investment and investment in new ventures.

Bogus sales, capital assets, debtors and profit were shown in group concerns to get more loans so that it doesnt get non-performing assets (NPA) tag, the sources said. It is alleged that the shares of listed companies were "rigged", books of account were window dressed for obtaining higher loans through collusion of auditors/professionals.

Thousands of crores of assets have been allegedly parked in the name of shell companies, a number of foreign assets have been created and money is still parked under the new names through benami directors and shareholders, the ED found. *—PTI*

Baramulla encounter: Terrorists linked with LeT

SRINAGAR, 20 JUNE

The Army on Thursday said the two terrorists killed in an encounter with security forces in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir were Pakistani and associated with Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

"The killed terrorists have been identified as Usman and Umar, both of Pakistan origin and associated with LeT," Commander 7 Sector Rashtriya Rifles, Brigadier Deepak Mohan, told reporters in Rafiabad.

Two terrorists were killed and two security personnel injured in the encounter that broke out on Wednesday in Baramulla district of north Kashmir.

The forces launched a cordon-and-search operation in the Watergam area of Baramulla in the morning on information about the presence of terrorists there, which then turned into an encounter when the terrorists opened fire at the security personnel.

The Brigadier said Usman has been active in the Kashmir Valley since 2020. Significant quantities of weapons and ammunition have been recovered after the operation, the army officer said.

PHOTO: PTI

- Significant quantities of weapons and ammunition have been recovered after the operation, the army officer said

He said over the past few weeks there has been constant information on the movement of a terrorist group in the Sopore-Raflabad area of Baramulla District. On Wednesday, specific intelligence was received through JKP that two terrorists were holed up in a house in the Hadipura village of the Rafiabad area. *—PTI*

4-YEAR LOW

Indians' funds in Swiss banks plunge 70%

This decline in aggregate funds of Indian clients with Swiss banks is for the second consecutive year *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI/ZURICH, 20 JUNE

Funds parked by Indian individuals and firms in Swiss banks, including through local branches and other financial institutions, fell sharply by 70 per cent in 2023 to a four-year low of 1.04 billion Swiss Francs (Rs 9,771 crore), annual data from Switzerland's central bank showed on Thursday.

The decline in aggregate funds of Indian clients with Swiss banks for the second consecutive year, after hitting a 14-year-high of CHF 3.83 billion in 2021, was largely driven by a sharp plunge in funds held through bonds, securities and various other financial instruments.

Besides, the amount in customer deposit accounts and funds held through other bank branches in India also declined significantly, the data showed. These are official figures reported by banks to the Swiss National Bank (SNB) and do not indicate the quantum of the much-debated alleged black money held by Indians in Switzerland. These figures also do not include the money that Indians, NRIs or others might have in Swiss banks in the names of third-country entities.

The total amount of CHF 1,039.8 million, described by the SNB as 'total liabilities' of Swiss banks or 'amounts due to' their Indian clients at the end of 2023, included CHF 310 million in customer deposits (down from CHF 394 million at 2022-end), CHF 427 million held via other banks (down from CHF 1,110 million), CHF 10 million (down from CHF 24 million) through fiduciaries or trusts, and CHF 302 million as 'other amounts due to customers in form of bonds, securities and various other financial instruments (down from CHF 1,896 million). *—PTI*

IIT FINES 8 ₹1.2 L EACH FOR PLAY MOCKING RAM

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

The Indian Institute of India (IIT) Bombay has imposed a fine of up to Rs 1.2 lakh on eight students, who performed a play that allegedly mocked Lord Ram and portrayed the 'Ramayana' in a bad light, a fellow student said on Thursday.

The students had presented the play named 'Raahovan' on 31 March this year, as part of the Performing Arts Festival (PAF). "The play that was presented mocked Lord Ram and portrayed the Ramayana in a vulgar and derogatory manner," said a Masters student at the institute.

The student, who declined to be named, is one of those who lodged a complaint against the play with the administration. Another student affiliated to the Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle (APPSC) at the IIT Bombay also confirmed that students were fined for presenting the play. The APPSC is a left-leaning student's body.

"Following the complaint, each of the eight students was fined in the range of Rs 40,000 to Rs 1,20,000," the student said. A notice issued by the IIT Bombay registrar's office dated June 4 said the fine has to be paid by the students by 30 July.

The IIT Bombay has declined to comment on the issue. "We welcome disciplinary action taken by the @iitbombay administration against those involved in the play 'Raahovan,' which depicted the Ramayana in a derogatory manner.

These students abused their academic freedom to mock Lord Ram, Mata Sita, and Lord Laxman," said @IITBforBharat on social media site X on June 19.

The @IITBforBharat is an account on X which calls itself a group of volunteers aimed at having a common space for Indic civilisational values. *—PTI*

WB accident: Probe blames lapses by goods train crew

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

The initial probe into the 17 June Kanchanjunga Express accident has suggested there were lapses by the operating department of the New Jalpaiguri Rail Division and the crew of the goods train that hit the passenger train.

At least 10 people were killed, including the passenger train's guard and the pilot of the goods train after it rammed into the stationary Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express in West Bengal's Darjeeling district on Monday.

The collision occurred near Rangapani station, 30 km from New Jalpaiguri station, causing four rear compartments of Kanchanjunga Express to derail due to the impact by the goods train's locomotive at 8.55 am, the official said.

Soon after the accident, Railway Board chairperson Jaya Varma Sinha had said the collision took place because the goods train disregarded the signal. The Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) has started a probe into the cause of the accident. While five officials have blamed the goods train driver for violating signals as well as the speed restriction, one has given a dissenting note suggesting that the operating department of the New Jalpaiguri rail division failed to take adequate measures to safeguard the route between Ranipatra and Chattar Hat Junction. The majority view is that the rear-end dashing of the Kanchanjunga Express by the goods train may have occurred due to the failure of the goods train crew (driver, assistant driver and guard) to obey the rule of "passing the automatic signal at danger position" and also "keeping the excessive speed of the train". *—PTI*

The collision occurred near Rangapani station *PHOTO: PTI*

HOOCH TRAGEDY

Methanol mixed arrack kills 34 in TN: CM

KALLAKURICHI / CHENNAI, 20 JUNE

People belonging to Kallakurichi district have died following consumption of 'methanol mixed arrack,' Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said on Thursday. Also, he announced Rs 50,000 assistance to those who are being treated in hospitals.

The entire Karunapuram locality in Kallakurichi on Thursday echoed with the wails of the family members of the victims of illicit arrack that claimed the lives of at least 34 people, with about 100 others under medical treatment.

Following the tragedy in the state's northern district, the Opposition lashed out at the DMK while the ruling party said it should not be assumed such issues happened only during its regime.

Stalin, who held a meeting to review the situation, announced setting up of a one-man commission to be led by retired Madras High Court Judge B Gokuldas to make recommendations to the government on measures to be taken to prevent recurrence of such incidents and also look into the reasons for the deaths.

Families mourn the death of a relative due to consumption of spurious liquor, in Kallakurichi district on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

He assured tough action against those who provided methanol for making the spurious concoction that became poisonous.

The entire Karunapuram, which has witnessed the deaths, including that of two women and one transgender, wore a gloomy look. Launching a scathing attack on the Stalin government over the deaths of 34 people in the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy, AIADMK general secretary Edapaddi K Palaniswami on Thursday said ruling "DMK is behind illicit liquor sales in Tamil Nadu" and drugs are being sold all over the state. He also demanded the resignation of Stalin over the tragedy. Palaniswami inspected the Kallakurichi Government Medical College Hospital where illicit liquor victims are hospitalised.

> **Nearly 200 people are affected, 133 are under treatment. One by one people are coming to the hospital. Kallakurichi is the epic centre for illicit liquor**
>
> -Edapaddi K Palaniswami, AIADMK General Secretary

BJP national co-incharge of Tamil Nadu affairs P Sudhakar Reddy on Thursday said that Stalin should take moral responsibility for the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi and demanded that Prohibition and Excise Minister S Muthusamy be dropped from the cabinet immediately. Addressing the press conference, the AIADMK chief said, "Nearly 200 people are affected, 133 are under treatment. One by one people are coming to the hospital. Kallakurichi is the epic centre for illicit liquor. It's making us sad and worrying. All dead and affected are poor and underprivileged." *—ANI/PTI*

COLLIDED!

A train sits on top of another after they collided in San Bernardo, Santiago, Chile, on Thursday
PHOTO: PTI

Is Earth really getting too hot for people to survive?

My parents said the planet is getting too hot for people to live here. They called it climate change. What does that mean? – Joseph, age 12, Boise, Idaho.

Many countries have seen extremely hot weather lately, but in most of the inhabited world, it's never going to get "too hot for people to live here," especially in relatively dry climates.

When it's hot outside in dry places, most of the time our bodies can cool off by evaporating water and heat from our skin as sweat. However, there are places where it occasionally gets dangerously hot and humid, especially where hot deserts are right next to the warm ocean. When the air is humid, sweat doesn't evaporate as quickly, so sweating doesn't cool us the way it does in drier environments.

In parts of the Middle East, Pakistan and India, summer heat waves can combine with humid air that blows in off the sea, and this combination can be truly deadly. Hundreds of millions of people live in those regions, most without access to indoor air conditioning.

Scientists like me use a "wet bulb thermometer" to get a better sense of this risk. A wet bulb thermometer allows water to evaporate by blowing ambient air over a damp cloth. If the wet bulb temperature is over 95 F (35 C), and even at lower levels, the human body won't be able to let enough heat out. Prolonged exposure to such combined heat and humidity can be fatal.

During a severe heat wave in 2023, wet bulb temperatures were very high over the lower Mississippi Valley, though they didn't reach fatal levels.

In Delhi, India, where air temperatures were over 120 degree Fahrenheit (49 Celsius) for several days in May 2024, the wet bulb temperatures came close, and several people died from suspected heatstroke in the hot and humid weather. In conditions like that, everyone has to take precautions.

Is it climate change?

Air temperatures were over 49 Celsius for several days in May and several people died from suspected heatstroke
PHOTO: ANI

When people burn carbon – whether it's coal in a power plant or gasoline in a vehicle – it creates carbon dioxide (CO_2). This invisible gas builds up in the atmosphere and traps the Sun's warmth near the Earth's surface.

The result is what we mean by "climate change."

Every bit of coal, oil or gas that ever gets burned adds a little bit more to the temperature. As temperatures rise, dangerously hot and humid weather has begun to spread to more places.

Areas of the US Gulf Coast in Louisiana and Texas are increasingly at risk of dangerous hot and humid conditions in summer, as are heavily irrigated areas of the desert Southwest where water sprayed over farm fields adds moisture to the atmosphere.

Climate change causes a lot more problems than just hot, sweaty weather.

Hot air evaporates a lot more water, so crops, forests and landscapes in some areas dry out, which makes them more susceptible to wildfire. Each Celsius degree of warming can cause a sixfold increase in wildfire over parts of the western US.

- Every bit of coal, oil or gas that ever gets burned adds a little bit more to the temperature. As temperatures rise, dangerously hot and humid weather has begun to spread to more places

Warming also makes ocean water expand, which can flood coastal regions. Rising sea levels threaten to displace as many as 2 billion people by 2100. All of these impacts mean that climate change threatens the global economy. Continuing to burn coal, oil and gas could cut global incomes by about 25% by the end of the century, according to one estimate.

Good news and bad news

There's both bad news and good news about climate change in the future.

The bad news is that as long as we keep burning carbon, it will continue to get hotter and hotter.

The good news is that we can substitute clean energy, like solar and wind power, instead of burning carbon, to power the products and services of modern life.

There's been tremendous progress in the past 15 years in making clean energy reliable and affordable, and almost every country on Earth has now agreed to stop climate change before too much damage is done.

Just as our ancestors built better lives by switching from outhouses to indoor plumbing, we will avoid making our world unlivable by switching from coal, oil and gas to clean energy.

—The Conversation

SALAR

China is the true power in Putin, Kim's friendship

The welcome hug on the tarmac at 03:00, the honour guard of mounted soldiers, the huge portraits of Kim Jong UN and Vladimir Putin hanging side by side in the centre of Pyongyang – all of this was designed to worry the West.

Putin's first visit to Pyongyang since 2000 was a chance for Russia and North Korea to flaunt their friendship. And flaunt it they did, with Kim declaring his "full support" for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Seoul, Tokyo, Washington and Brussels will see great peril in those words and in the stage-managed meeting. But the fact is the two leaders feel they need each other - Putin badly requires ammunition to keep the war going and North Korea needs money.

However, the real power in the region was not in Pyongyang – and nor did it want to be. Mr Putin and Mr Kim were bonding on China's doorstep and so would have been wary of provoking Beijing, a vital source of both trade and clout for these two sanctioned regimes.

And even as Putin hails his "firm friendship" with Kim, he must know it has a limit. And that limit is Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Vladimir Putin badly requires ammunition to keep the war going and North Korea needs money
PHOTO: PTI

A wary Beijing is watching

There are some signs Xi disapproves of the burgeoning alliance between two of his allies.

Reports suggest Beijing urged President Putin not to visit Pyongyang straight after meeting President Xi in May. It seems Chinese officials did not like the optics of North Korea being included in that visit.

And he cannot ignore these warnings. Just as the world needs the Chinese market, Beijing also needs foreign tourists and investment to fight off sluggish growth and retain its spot as the world's second-largest economy.

It is now offering visa-free travel to visitors from parts of Europe as well as from Thailand and Australia. And its pandas are once again being dispatched to foreign zoos. Perceptions matter to China's ambitious leader, who wants to take on a bigger global role and challenge the US. He certainly does not want to become a pariah or face fresh pressure from the West. At the same time, he is still managing his relationship with Moscow.

While he has not condemned the invasion of Ukraine, he has so far failed to provide significant military assistance to Russia. And during the meeting in May, his cautious rhetoric was in contrast to Putin's florid compliments about Xi.

The Global Story: Why Putin and Xi are courting Kim

But Xi is no fan of an emboldened Kim Jong Un.

Pyongyang's weapons tests have enabled Japan and South Korea to set aside their bitter history to ink a defence deal with the US. And when tensions rise, more US warships turn up in Pacific waters, triggering Xi's fears of an "East Asian Nato".

Beijing's disapproval may force Russia to reconsider selling more technology to the North Koreans. The possibility of that happening is also one of the US' biggest concerns.

Andrei Lankov, the director of NK News, says he is sceptical: "I don't expect Russia to provide North Korea with a large amount of military technology."

He believes Russia "is not getting much and probably creating potential problems for the future" if it did so. While North Korean artillery would be a shot in the arm for Putin's war effort, swapping missile tech for it would not exactly be a great deal. And Putin might realise it's not worth irking China, which buys Russian oil and gas, and remains a crucial ally in a world that has isolated him.

It's the only other country Kim visits. Anywhere between a quarter to a half of North Korea's oil comes from Russia, but at least 80% of its business is with China. One analyst described the China-North Korea relationship as an oil lamp that keeps burning.

China is too important to lose

Despite their avowed fight against the "imperialist West", this is a wartime partnership. It may develop but, for now, it appears transactional, even as they upgrade their partnership to the level of "alliance".

The impressive-sounding Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement between the two countries, announced at the meeting between Putin and Kim, is no guarantee that Pyongyang can keep supplying ammunition. More importantly, Russia and North Korea did not prioritise their relationship for decades. When he was friendly with the West, Putin sanctioned Pyongyang twice and even joined the US, China, South Korea and Japan to persuade the North to give up its nuclear programme.

When Kim Jong Un ventured out for a whirlwind of diplomatic summits in 2018, he met Vladimir Putin only once. Back then Kim's wide smiles, hugs and handshakes were for the South Korean president Moon Jae-in. They met three times.

He exchanged "love letters" with then US President Donald Trump before their three meetings – a man he once called a "dotard" suddenly became "special". He also held three summits with Xi, the first international leader he ever met.

So Putin is new to the party. And yet he has not turned on the charm, while Mr Kim has lined the streets with roses and red carpets. The Russian leader's column in the North Korean state newspaper highlighted shared interests to "resolutely oppose" Western ambitions to "hinder the establishment of a multi-polar world order based on a mutual respect for justice".

But it was missing the flattery he heaped on Xi, who he declared was as close as a "brother", while praising a slowing Chinese economy for "developing in leaps and bounds". He even said his family were learning Mandarin.

He certainly would not dare keep President Xi waiting for hours and arrive as late as he did in Pyongyang. They also don't seem to have worked out who is the more important partner, judging by the awkward moment where they debated who should get in a car first.

With China, they are both supplicants. And without China, they and their regimes will struggle.

—BBC News

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

UNHCR: Number of displaced worldwide exceeds 120 million

120 million people, or one in 69 individuals worldwide, are displaced.

One out of every 69 people on Earth is now displaced.

That is about 120 million people, or 1.5 per cent of the world's population, who have been uprooted from their homes. Behind these numbers are countless human stories of families separated, livelihoods lost and communities shattered.

Sixty-eight million of those are internally displaced within their own countries. The rest are refugees in need of protection (43.4 million) and people who are seeking asylum (6.9 million), according to the annual displacement report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). To raise awareness about the situation of refugees worldwide, the UN designated June 20 each year as World Refugee Day.

If forcibly displaced people formed a country, it would be the 13th most populated in the world just behind Japan. About half of these forcibly displaced people are children.

Visualising 72 years of refugee journeys

In 1951, the UN established the Refugee Convention to protect the rights of refugees in Europe in the aftermath of World War II. In 1967, the convention was expanded to address displacement across the rest of the world.

When the Refugee Convention was born, there were 2.1 million refugees. By 1980, the number of refugees recorded by the UN surpassed 10 million for the first time. Wars in Afghanistan and Ethiopia during the 1980s caused the number of refugees to double to 20 million by 1990.

The number of refugees remained fairly consistent over the next two decades. However, the United States invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 together with civil wars in South Sudan and Syria resulted in refugee numbers exceeding 30 million by the end of 2021.

The war in Ukraine, which started in 2022, led to one of the fastest growing refugee crises since World War II with 5.7 million people forced to flee Ukraine in less than a year. By the end of 2023, six million Ukrainians remained forcibly displaced.

In 2023, conflict in Sudan between the army and the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary increased the number of refugees to 1.5 million. Before the war, Sudan had taken in many Syrian refugees. When the war started, the number of Syrian refugees in Sudan dropped from 93,500 in 2022 to 26,600 in 2023 as many left for other countries. Thousands of people are still being displaced daily more than a year after the conflict began.

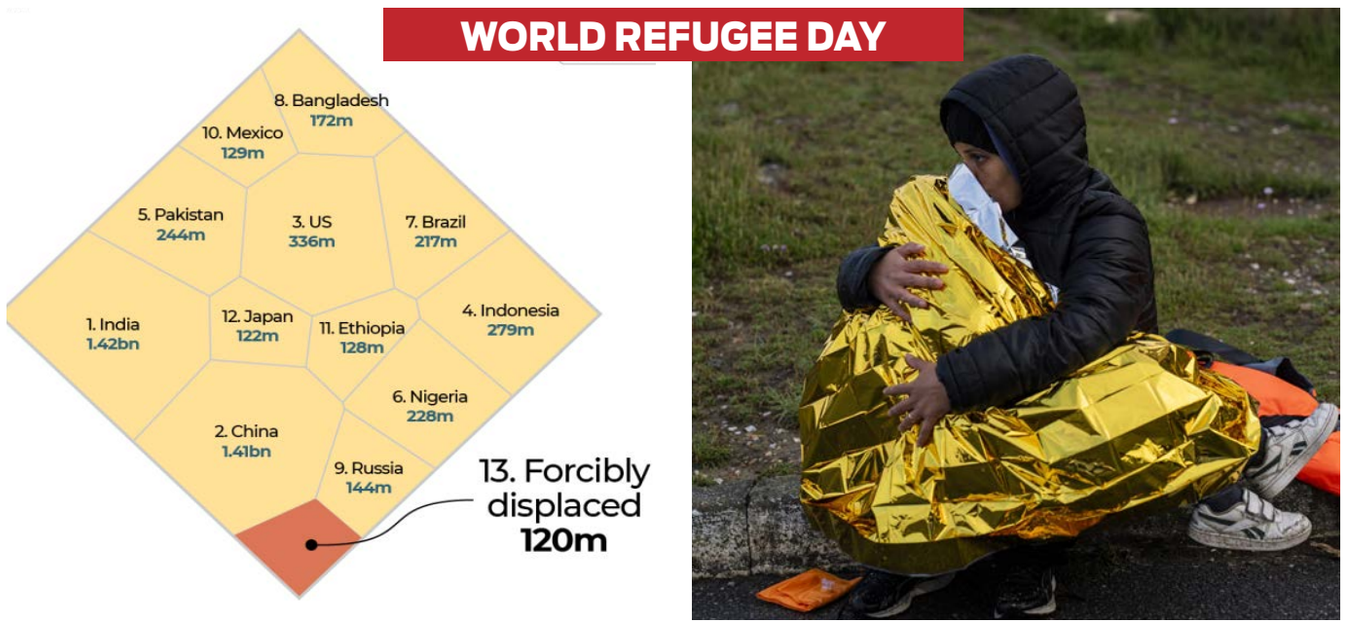
Most recently, Israel's bombardment of the Gaza Strip has had a devastating toll on the Palestinian population. UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, estimated that from October to December, up to 1.7 million people – more than 75 per cent of the population - have been displaced within the Gaza Strip with many having been forced to flee multiple times.

The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is extremely dire with all 2.3 million inhabitants facing food shortages and the threat of famine. As of 2024, almost three-quarters (72 per cent) of all refugees came from just five countries: Afghanistan (6.4 million), Syria (6.4 million), Venezuela (6.1 million), Ukraine (6 million) and Palestine (6 million).

Under international law, refugees are people who are forced to flee their home countries to escape persecution or a serious threat to their life, physical integrity or freedom.

Where do refugees settle?

Almost 70 percent of refugees and others in need of international protection live in countries next to their countries of origin.



Displaced refugees countrywise; 120 million people, or one in 69 individuals worldwide, are displaced
PHOTO: AL JAZEERA/ AP

- Globally, the largest refugee populations are hosted by Iran (3.8 million), Turkey (3.3 million), Colombia (2.9 million), Germany (2.6 million) and Pakistan (2 million). Nearly all refugees in Iran and Pakistan are Afghans while most refugees in Turkey are Syrians

Globally, the largest refugee populations are hosted by Iran (3.8 million), Turkey (3.3 million), Colombia (2.9 million), Germany (2.6 million) and Pakistan (2 million).

Nearly all refugees in Iran and Pakistan are Afghans while most refugees in Turkey are Syrians.

In the past decade, refugee numbers have increased in these major host countries except for Turkey, where numbers have dropped by 14 percent since 2021.

Germany is the only major host country that does not border the main refugee source countries. Most refugees in Germany at the end of 2023 were from Ukraine (1.1 million), Syria (705,800), Afghanistan (255,100) and Iraq (146,500).

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

PHOTO: PTI

35 Pakistanis among 900 dead during Hajj

ISLAMABAD, 20 JUNE

At least 35 Pakistanis were among more than 900 people from around the world who died during this year's Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia marked by searing heat, the government said. Pakistan's Ministry of Religious Affairs said that Hajj was challenging this year due to extreme heat and harsh weather conditions, with temperatures reaching 50 degrees Celsius. Saudi state TV said temperatures on Monday rose as high as 51.8 degrees Celsius. The Director General of Pakistan's Hajj Mission, Abdul Wahab Soomro, said on Wednesday that as of 18 June, a total of 35 Pakistani casualties had been reported. This includes 20 in Makkah, six in Madina, four in Mina, three in Arafat and two in Muzdalifah, the Dawn newspaper quoted Soomro as saying. *—PTI*

10 Commandments to be displayed in Lousiana classrooms

BATON ROUGE, 20 JUNE

Louisiana has become the first US state to order that every public school classroom up to university level must display a poster of the Ten Commandments. The Republican-backed measure signed into law by Governor Jeff Landry on Wednesday describes the commandments as "the foundational documents of our state and national government". The law is expected to be challenged by civil rights groups, which argue that it contravenes the separation between church and state enshrined in the first amendment to the US Constitution, the so-called Establishment Clause. It says: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." *—BBC News*

Malaysian leader Anwar says China a 'true friend'

KUALA LUMPUR, 20 JUNE

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on Thursday rejected the notion that China's dominance is to be feared, calling China a "true friend" at the end of Premier Li Qiang's visit to mark 50 years of diplomatic ties between their countries. While the leaders raised some contentious bilateral issues, Anwar said they discussed them as "equal partners, as trusted friends." He didn't give details but likely referred to the prickly issue of overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea. "People say, well, Malaysia is a growing economy. To the contrary, we want to benefit from one another, we want to learn from one another and we want to profit from this engagement," Anwar told said. *—PTI*

Israel plans to import 92,000 foreign workers

TEL AVIV, 20 JUNE

Seeking to address a labour shortage, Israeli officials approved a quota of 92,000 foreign workers to fill jobs in agriculture, industry, hotels and restaurants, the Prime Minister's Office announced on Tuesday. This marks the first time Israel has authorized foreign workers for the restaurant industry. Seventy percent of the quota is specifically set aside for agricultural laborers. Israeli agriculture is facing staggering losses in production and manpower. Before 7 October, Israel had 29,900 foreigners, mostly Thais, working in farms, orchards, greenhouses and packing plants. Israeli workers who might have filled the gaps have been called up for military reserve duty while Palestinian labourers are currently banned as security risks. Many growing areas are within two kilometres of the Lebanese border where farmers does not have access. *—ANI*

Putin in Vietnam, seeks to boost ties in Southeast Asia

Vietnam has remained neutral on Ukraine's invasion

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Vietnam's President To Lam pose for photos at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi, Vietnam on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

HANOI, 20 JUNE

Russian President Vladimir Putin is seeking to strengthen ties with longtime partner Vietnam on a state visit Thursday that comes as Moscow faces growing international isolation because of its military actions in Ukraine.

Putin was greeted by dignitaries upon his arrival in the Southeast Asian country as soldiers in white dress uniforms stood at attention. He arrived from North Korea, where he and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed an agreement that pledges mutual aid in the event of war.

The strategic pact that could mark the strongest connection between Moscow and Pyongyang since the end of the Cold War comes as both face escalating standoffs with the West.

In Hanoi, Putin is scheduled to meet Vietnam's most powerful politician, Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, the new President To Lam and other officials. The trip has resulted in a sharp rebuke from the US Embassy in the country.

Much has changed since Putin's last visit to Vietnam in 2017. Russia now faces a raft of US-led sanctions for its invasion of Ukraine. In 2023, the International Criminal Court in Hague issued an arrest warrant for Putin. The Kremlin rejected it as "null and void," stressing that Moscow doesn't recognize the court's jurisdiction.Putin's recent visits to China and now North Korea and Vietnam are attempts to "break the international isolation," said Nguyen Khac Giang, an analyst at Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.The US and its allies have expressed growing concerns over a possible arms arrangement in which Pyongyang provides Moscow with badly needed munitions for its use in Ukraine, in exchange for economic assistance and technology transfers that could enhance the threat posed by Kim's nuclear weapons and missile programme. Both countries deny accusations of weapons transfers, which would violate multiple UN Security Council sanctions that Russia previously endorsed. Meanwhile, Russia is important to Vietnam for two reasons, Giang said: It is the biggest supplier of military equipment to the Southeast Asian nation, and Russian oil exploration technologies help maintain its sovereignty claims in the contested South China Sea.

Vietnam has remained neutral on Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But neutrality is getting trickier, with the US Embassy in Hanoi criticising Putin's visit, saying that "no country should give Putin a platform to promote his war of aggression and otherwise allow him to normalize his atrocities." *—PTI*

WILL CONSIDER ARMS SUPPLIES TO UKRAINE: S KOREA

SEOUL, 20 JUNE

South Korea's Presidential office condemned an agreement reached by Russia and North Korea that vowed mutual defence assistance in the event of war and says it will reconsider its policy of limiting support to Ukraine of non-lethal supplies.

The comments by a senior presidential official on Thursday came after the office issued a statement condemning the agreement reached by Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in their summit in Pyongyang on Wednesday. The office said the agreement posed a threat to South Korea's security and warned that it will negatively affect Seoul's relations with Moscow.

The Presidential official, who spoke on condition of anonymity during a background briefing, according to office rules, said Seoul in response will reconsider the issue of providing arms to Ukraine to help the country fight off Russia's invasion.

South Korea, a growing arms exporter with a well-equipped military backed by the United States, has provided humanitarian aid and other support to Ukraine while joining US-led economic sanctions against Moscow. *—PTI*

WITH AXES AND KNIVES

The confrontation between Chinese and Philippine coast guard in the disputed South China Sea *PHOTO: ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES*

Chinese troops attack Filipino soldiers in South China Sea

MANILA, 20 JUNE

Philippines soldiers used their "bare hands" to fight off Chinese coast guard personnel armed with swords, spears and knives in the disputed South China Sea, the country's top military commander has said.

General Romeo Brawner accused Chinese vessels of ramming Philippine boats, then boarding them and seizing weapons.

One Filipino soldier lost a thumb when his vessel was rammed, the general said. China denied its personnel were to blame, saying they had been "restrained".

There have been a string of dangerous encounters as the two sides seek to enforce their claims on disputed reefs and outcrops - this appears to be an escalation.

The skirmish happened as the Philippine navy and coast guard were delivering supplies to Filipino troops stationed in the Second Thomas Shoal. Chinese personnel also seized a number of guns and destroyed items - including motors - and punctured inflatable vessels.

Beijing dismissed the allegations, saying its personnel were aiming to block an "illegal transportation" of supplies. In an earlier statement, the Chinese coast guard said the Philippines was "entirely responsible" for the incident, as troops "ignored China's repeated solemn warnings... and dangerously approached a Chinese vessel in normal navigation in an unprofessional manner, resulting in a collision".

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos warned security forum in Singapore last month that if a Filipino died as a result of China's wilful actions, Manila would consider it as close to "an act of war" and would respond accordingly. *—BBC News*

In March, the agency has reported that more than 3,62,000 people were displaced in Haiti *PHOTO: PTI*

Haiti gang has violence displaced 5 L people: UN

PORT AU PRINCE, 20 JUNE

Surging violence in Haiti from clashes with armed gangs since March has displaced nearly 5,80,000 people, according to a new report from the UN migration agency, a sobering figure that underscores the magnitude of the Caribbean nation's crisis.

Haiti has long faced unrest but at the end of February, gangs unleashed coordinated attacks with gunmen taking control of police stations, opening fire on the main international airport that remained closed for nearly three months and stormed Haiti's two biggest prisons.

A report released on Tuesday by the International Organisation for Migration said the displacement of more than half a million is mainly due to people fleeing the capital of Port-au-Prince for other provinces, which lack the resources to support them.

In March, the agency reported more than 3,62,000 internally displaced people in Haiti. Since then, the violence has more than doubled the number of internally displaced in the southern region — already ravaged by a 2021 earthquake — from 1,16,000 to 2,70,000.

"Nearly all those internally displaced are currently hosted by communities already struggling with overburdened social services and poor infrastructure, raising further concerns about tensions with the potential to spark further violence," the report said. *—PTI*

Sweden acquits ex-Syrian general of role in war crimes

COPENHAGEN, 20 JUNE

A Swedish court on Thursday acquitted a former Syrian army general accused of playing a role in war crimes committed in 2012 in his home country.

Brig. Gen Mohammed Hamo, who now lives in Sweden, was charged in February with aiding and abetting crimes violating international law.

Syria has been ravaged by civil war for over 13 years.

Little is known about the 65-year-old Hamo. He defected from the Syrian army in July 2012 and joined those fighting to remove President Bashar Assad from power. Syrian opposition activists say he was involved in fighting in the once rebel-held neighbourhood of Baba Amr in Homs, Syria's third largest city. He lived in central Sweden at the time when he was arrested over his supposed participation in war crimes on 7 December, 2021. A court at the time released him two days later, saying there wasn't enough evidence to keep him incarcerated. He has since been free.The trial at the Stockholm District Court started 15 April. The last court session was 21 May. *—PTI*

Canada lists Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist group

The move will mean that thousands of senior Iranian government officials, including top IRGC officials, will be barred from entering Canada *PHOTO: EPA*

TORONTO, 20 JUNE

Canada has listed Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation, after years of pressure from Opposition legislators and some members of the Iranian diaspora.

Announcing the decision on Wednesday, Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc called it a "significant tool in fighting global terrorism".

The move will mean that thousands of senior Iranian government officials, including top IRGC officials, will be barred from entering Canada.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, quoted by Iran's Fars news agency, has condemned what he described as the "unwise and unconventional" step.

The IRGC is a major military, political and economic force in Iran, with close ties to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

It is estimated to have more than 190,000 active personnel with its own ground forces, navy and air force that oversee Iran's strategic weapons.

The IRGC exerts influence elsewhere in the Middle East by providing money, weapons, technology, training and advice to allied governments and armed groups through its shadowy overseas operations arm, the Quds (Jerusalem) Force, according to the government.

The Quds Force was already listed as wa terrorist group by Canada, but Wednesday's announcement extends the designation to the entire IRGC.

LeBlanc said the action "sends a strong message that Canada will use all of the tools at its disposal to combat the terrorist entity of the IRGC". *—BBC News*

PARIS TELLS MACRON 'BATHE IN OUR SHIT'

1 Paris is all ready to host the 2024 Olympics. But guess what? Not all Parisians are happy about it considering the fact that nations which hosted Olympics in the past using taxpayers' money suffered major losses.

China's loss in 2022 **$36.4 billion**

London's loss in 2012 **$13 billion**

France is spending **$10B** for Olympics

PARIS 2024

2 French President Emmanuel Macron, however, is leaving no stone unturned to host the event. He has announced that the opening ceremony on 23 June will take place at the banks of River Siene, which winds throughout the heart of Paris. Swimming was banned in the river **100 years** ago due to severe pollution.

3 **$1.5 billion** has been allotted to clean the river but Parisians and critics say it is a farce as the entire sewage system ends up in the river. Factory effluents to human faeces, the river has it all. However, to prove them wrong, Macron and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo will swim in the river. Swimmers around the world are also expected to take a dip.

4 **FRENCH REVOLUTION**

In what can be arguably called a hi-tech French Revolution, the chic Parisians are calling out Macron's "lies" in a not so chic way. Citizens announced 'defecation flash-mob' on 23 June, on the day Macron and the Mayor will swim in Siene. The protesters on X said, "Because after putting us in s***, it is up to them to bathe in our shit".

HOW ARE THEY PROTESTING?

5

- Protesters have started a website called https://jechiedanslaseinele23juin.fr/ which translates to 'I shit in the Siene on 23 June for Macron'. The site will give the users the exact time one needs to take a dump in their toilet so that it reaches Siene River at the same time Macron will swim in it.
- Participants register their location on the website, this will track how many kilometres a person is away from the river.
- The website will use waterflow algorithm to give the protester the exact time to poop.

Sensex, Nifty scale fresh record high levels

BSE jumped 1,022.34 points or 1.33 per cent in last six days

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty soared to new lifetime highs on Thursday, fuelled by intense buying in market heavyweights Reliance, ICICI Bank and HDFC Bank amid a recent surge in foreign capital inflows.

Besides, stable global crude prices extended support to capital markets amid investors looking for fresh triggers, traders said.Rallying for the sixth straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 141.34 points or 0.18 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 77,478.93. During the day, it surged 305.5 points or 0.39 per cent to 77,643.09.

As many as 2,282 stocks advanced while 1,571 declined and 128 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The BSE benchmark has jumped 1,022.34 points or 1.33 per cent in the last six days.

The NSE Nifty rose 51 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at its fresh closing high of 23,567. Intra-day, it soared 108 points or 0.45 per cent to 23,624.

"FIIs have been net buyers in Indian equities for the last three days and have bought Rs 12,600 crore, which includes a few large block deals. On the domestic front, the market is consolidating with a positive bias amid strong FII flows and healthy macros.Also, an expectation of a growth-focused budget is aiding sentiments and is likely to lead to sector-specific action," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Among the 30 Sensex companies, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, Axis Bank, Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Asian Paints were among the biggest gainers.In contrast, Mahindra & Mahindra, Sun Pharma, NTPC, Wipro, State Bank of India and Power Grid were among the laggards.

"Markets were a bit volatile in early trade but settled in positive territory to move in a range-bound manner thereafter, as investors resorted to stock-specific selection after witnessing record-breaking spree over the past few sessions. Also, US indices were closed on Wednesday, and hence, domestic investors were cautiously optimistic," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1 per cent, and the midcap index rallied 0.55 per cent. — *PTI*

The NSE Nifty rose 51 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at its fresh closing high of 23,567 **PHOTO: PTI**

Rupee plunges 17 paise to settle at 83.61 against dollar

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

The rupee plunged 17 paise to settle at over two-month low level of 83.61 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday amid surging crude oil prices due to renewed geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, even though the domestic equity markets hit fresh peaks. According to forex traders, inflow of foreign capital and positive momentum in domestic equity markets failed to support the local unit which gave in to the pressure due to a firm American currency against major rivals overseas. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.43 and touched the intra-day high of 83.42 against the greenback. During the session, the currency hit an all-time low of 83.68 against the dollar. The rupee finally settled at 83.61 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a steep fall of 17 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee settled 1 paisa lower at 83.44 against dollar. Earlier, it closed at 83.61 against dollar on April 16 this year.—*PTI*

Gold jumps ₹120; silver surges ₹900 amid global cues

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Gold prices jumped Rs 120 to Rs 72,550 per 10gm in the national capital on Thursday amid strong trends globally, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had ended at Rs 72,430 per 10gm in the previous session.Silver prices also surged Rs 900 to Rs 92,300 per kg. It had settled at Rs 91,400 per kg on Wednesday. "In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,550 per 10gm, up by Rs 120 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,332 per ounce, up USD 5 from the previous close. "Gold prices remained positive, as US participants returned from the Juneteenth holiday with a buying sentiment. —*PTI*

JSW MG Motor partners with Ecofy for EV financing

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

JSW MG Motor India on Thursday said it has partnered with Eversource Capital-backed NBFC Ecofy to provide financing and leasing solutions for its electric vehicles.The two companies have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under which Ecofy will provide financing and leasing solutions for up to 10,000 JSW MG EVs over the next three years, it said in a statement. This will include loan options and leasing arrangements across retail customers and B2B operators for the existing and forthcoming electric vehicles of JSW MG Motor India, the company added. "This partnership reflects JSW MG India's commitment to offer innovative EV ownership solutions to augment the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in India," JSW MG Motor India, Chief Growth Officer, Gaurav Gupta said. By offering innovative financing solutions in collaboration with industry specialists, the company is making EV ownership more accessible and affordable, he added.—*PTI*

EPFO adds record 18.92 lakh net members in April

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Retirement fund body Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) added a record 18.92 lakh net members in April, payroll data released on Thursday showed. The addition during the month is the highest since the first payroll data was published in 2018, a labour ministry statement said. An increase of 31.29 per cent was registered in net member addition during April as compared to March 2024, it stated. According to the statement, EPFO's provisional payroll data released highlights that it has added 18.92 lakh net members in April. Further, the year-on-year analysis reveals a growth of 10 per cent in net member addition.—*PTI*

RBI GOVERNOR SAYS

'Timely action helped check unsecured loans'

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said not acting on unsecured lending could have created a "bigger problem", and RBI's actions on such practices have had the desired impact of slowing down growth in the riskier segment.

Addressing an international conference on financial resilience at the RBI's College of Supervisors here, Das said restrictions on unsecured lending were the result of a view that there could be a potential problem in the credit market because of growth in unsecured lending.

The overall headline parameters were looking good, but there was "clear evidence" of dilution of underwriting standards, lack of proper appraisals and a mentality to join the bandwagon for driving up the unsecured lending among some lenders, he added.

"We thought if left unattended, these vulnerabilities can become a bigger problem. So, we thought it is better to act in advance and slow down the credit growth," Das said.

Shaktikanta Das **PHOTO: PTI**

He expressed satisfaction that the RBI's action has had the desired impact, as the growth in unsecured lending has indeed slowed down.

Das said the growth in credit card portfolios has slowed down to 23 per cent from 30 per cent before the RBI (Reserve Bank of India) action, while growth in bank lending to Non-bank Finance Companies (NBFC) has slowed to 18 per cent from the earlier 29 per cent.

It can be noted that on November 16 last year, the RBI increased the risk weights on unsecured lending and exposure to NBFCs, which will make banks set aside larger amounts of capital on such assets. —*PTI*

WATCH DOG'S APPROVAL

Sebi orders Religare to seek approval for Burman family offer

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Markets watchdog Sebi has ordered non-banking financial company Religare Enterprises (REL) to seek statutory approvals from regulatory authorities for an open offer by Dabur India promoter Burman family before 12 July.

The Burman group accused Religare's board and its Chairperson Rashmi Saluja of obstructing the open offer. Meanwhile, Religare argued that the Burman family was not 'fit and proper' to undertake the acquisition.

Markets regulator Sebi said that the NBFC did not show any evidence that the Burman group suffers from such alleged infirmities.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the board's attempt to block the open offer, Sebi in its interim order said that Religare has "acted in an apparently hostile manner".

Sebi has ordered Religare to apply for approval to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), and Sebi.

In response to the latest development, Religare spokesperson said, "As per Sebi's advisory the company will apply for the fit and proper status of the acquirers (Burman Group) for the open offer to the concerned regulators including the RBI."

In its order, Sebi noted that Burman Group (MB Finmart, Puran Associates, VIC Enterprises and Milky Investment & Trading Company) were public shareholders of Religare Enterprises with 21.54 per cent shares in the company before 25 September, 2023.

Following this announcement, the Committee of Independent Directors of Religare raised multiple objections before Sebi, arguing that the Burman Group was not fit and proper to acquire these additional shares.

These objections were submitted on various dates between 18 October, 2023, and 11 June, 2024. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Ola Electric, Emcure Pharma get Sebi's nod to float IPO

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Electric two-wheeler company Ola Electric and Bain Capital-backed Emcure Pharmaceuticals have received Sebi's approval to raise funds through initial public offerings (IPOs), an update with the markets regulator showed on Thursday.

The two companies, which filed their preliminary IPO papers with Sebi in December 2023, obtained observations on 10 June, it added.

In Sebi's parlance, its observations means its go-ahead to float the public issue.

Ola Electric's proposed IPO is a combination of fresh issue of equity shares up to Rs 5,500 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of 9.52 crore equity shares by promoters and investors, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). —*PTI*

India, Cambodia hold talks on investment treaty, UPI collaboration

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

India and South East Asian nation Cambodia are negotiating collaboration in UPI-based digital payment to promote trade and tourism, the commerce ministry said on Thursday.

Both sides also deliberated upon diversification of the trade basket by identifying new products, bilateral investment treaty, recognition of Indian pharmacopoeia and collaboration in the pharma sector.

These issues among others were discussed during the second meeting of the India-Cambodia Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment (JWGTI) here on Wednesday.

Pharmacopoeia is a set of standards and quality specifications for ingredients, preparation and dosage forms of medicines manufactured, sold, consumed and exported in a country.

Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare which sets standards for all drugs that are manufactured, sold and consumed in India.

"The meeting discussed the progress of the ongoing efforts for collaboration in (Unified Payment Interface) UPI-based digital payment to promote trade and tourism," it said in a statement.

India has already collaborated with countries like the UAE on UPI.

The meeting was co-chaired by Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce Siddharth Mahajan and Director General for International Trade in the Cambodian Ministry of Commerce Long Kemvichet.

Mahajan mentioned the measures for deepening bilateral trade and investment and also emphasised on creation of mechanisms for cooperation and collaboration in sectors of mutual interest. —*PTI*

Indian PM Narendra Modi (left) and Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni **PHOTO: AFP**

- BIndia and South East Asian nation Cambodia are negotiating collaboration in UPI-based digital payment to promote trade and tourism, the commerce ministry said on Thursday. Both sides also deliberated upon diversification of the trade basket by identifying new products

Open AI founder sets up new AI Company

WASHINGTON, 20 JUNE

Ilya Sutskever, one of the founders of OpenAI who was involved in a failed effort to push out CEO Sam Altman, said he's starting a safety-focused artificial intelligence company.

Sutskever, a respected AI researcher who left the ChatGPT maker last month, said in a social media post on Wednesday that he's created Safe Superintelligence Inc. with two co-founders.

The company's only goal and focus is safely developing "superintelligence" - a reference to AI systems that are smarter than humans.

The company vowed not to be distracted by "management overhead or product cycles", and under its business model, work on safety and security would be "insulated from short-term commercial pressures", Sutskever and his co-founders Daniel Gross and Daniel Levy said in a prepared statement. —*PTI*

ZOOMCAR, AIR INDIA PARTNER UP TO ALLOW CAR BOOKING DIRECTLY FROM AIRPORTS

MUMBAI, 20 JUNE

Self-drive car sharing platform Zoomcar Holdings on Thursday said it has partnered with Air India Express to allow customers to book self-drive cars directly from the airport on the airline's mobile app as well as the website in 19 cities.

The collaboration also caters to the customer with varying requirements, leveraging the extensive fleet options and ensuring ample space for baggage carried through Air India Express's add-on packs such as carry-on-Xtra, international connecting baggage, and special equipment, Zoomcar said in a statement.

This collaboration will offer the customer access to self-driven car rentals in Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Delhi, Goa, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Kolkata, Kochi, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Madurai, Mumbai, Pune, Tiruchirappalli, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam, it said.

"We're focused on providing improved and personalised travel experiences for our guests at Zoomcar, and our partnership with Air India Express is another stepping stone towards this goal.

"With our airport delivery feature, getting a self-drive car from arrival to departure is as easy as online food delivery and the freedom to explore new places at your own will," Zoomcar Co-founder and CEO Greg Moran said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

- Self-drive car sharing platform Zoomcar Holdings on Thursday said it has partnered with Air India Express to allow customers to book self-drive cars directly from the airport on the airline's mobile app as well as the website in 19 cities

AHEAD OF BUDGET

Financial players pitch for tax sops

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Financial sector players on Thursday made a case for tax sops in the upcoming FY25 Budget for deepening of the market.

In a pre-Budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here, some of the players urged the government to fix tax arbitrage wherever it exists.

This was the second Pre-Budget Consultation which was attended by leading experts of the financial and capital markets sector in connection with the forthcoming General Budget 2024-25, the finance ministry said in a post on X.

The full Budget 2024-25 is expected to be presented in Parliament next month.

Emerging out of two-hour meeting with the finance minister, Arun Kohli, MD & Country Head, Morgan Stanley India Company, said tax policies need to be stable and long-term oriented.

Participants also made their point on capital gains tax and securities transaction tax.

According to George Alexander Muthoot, MD of Muthoot Group, some of the players pitched for deepening the market and provide some tax incentives.

"We've suggested that since Nonbank financial companies (NBFC) credit has grown and RBI has flagged over-dependence on banks, allocation of funds from Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and National Bank For Agriculture And Rural Development(NABARD) could increase for refinancing of NBFCs," Raman Aggarwal, Director FIDC said.

NBFCs (non-banking financial companies) also sought clarity on GST demand on co-lending and payment of GST on service fee, Agarwal said. —*PTI*

Nirmala Sitharaman with leading experts of the financial and capital markets sector ahead of General Budget in New Delhi. **PHOTO: X/@FINMININDIA**

Microsoft, IIT-B collab to upskill professionals with GenAI

NEW DELHI, 20 JUNE

Edtech platform upGrad on Thursday said it has collaborated with Microsoft and IIIT Bangalore to introduce 'Generative AI for Leaders' certification course in India.

The 4-month course seeks to train mid-career and seasoned professionals with core AI competencies, "setting the right tone for India Inc. to upskill and lead the global AI talent supply chain," a company statement said.

"When technologies such as these (AI, GenAI) get embedded into businesses, it is the need of the hour for senior leaders to understand how such technologies can be deployed optimally within their organisations to reap the maximal benefits," said V Sridhar, Professor In-charge of Continuing Professional Education, IIIT-Bangalore.

Upon completing the course and graded projects, learners will be eligible for a completion certification from IIIT-Bangalore and will also have the opportunity to participate in a 1-day offline immersion at both the Microsoft Development Centre and the IIIT-Bangalore campus. —*PTI*

PHOTO: AGENCY

EURO 2024

Shaqiri moves Swiss to verge of last 16 after Scotland draw

Scotland remains in the hunt to reach the knockout rounds of a major tournament

LEIPZIG, 20 JUNE

Switzerland moved within touching distance of a place in the last 16 at Euro 2024 as Xherdan Shaqiri's stunning strike earned a 1-1 draw against Scotland on Wednesday. Murat Yakin's side trailed to an early Scott McTominay goal that took a hefty deflection off Swiss defender Fabian Schar. But Shaqiri produced one of the goals of the tournament so far as the former Liverpool forward punished Anthony Ralston's woeful backpass with a brilliant curler from 20 yards. With honors even in Cologne, the Swiss sit in second place in Group A with four points, two behind Germany after the hosts beat Hungary 2-0 earlier on Wednesday.

Switzerland's Xherdan Shaqiri celebrates with Ruben Vargas after scoring their first goal **PHOTO: X / @EURO2024**

Switzerland, who defeated Hungary 3-1 in their opener, are not mathematically certain to advance to the knockout stages but they are in a strong position heading into their last game against Germany. "He deserves that magical moment. He did the only thing he could do with that wonderful strike.

"It's still very open. We will do everything we can to make it out of the group."

With the best four third-placed teams qualifying for the last 16, Scotland remains in the hunt to reach the knockout rounds of a major tournament for the first time.

Steve Clarke's team restored their pride with a battling display that erased the bitter taste of a wretched 5-1 loss to Germany in the tournament opener. Scotland has only one victory in their last 11 games, but a historic last 16 berth is still a possibility if they can improve their goal difference with a big win against Hungary. —*AP*

Kylian Mbappe, with a plaster on his broken nose, speaks to France coach Didier Deschamps **PHOTO: X / @K.MBAPPE**

Mbappe injury compels France to rethink game plan

LEIPZIG, 20 JUNE

France boasts fearsome strength in depth but remains hugely reliant on Kylian Mbappe for inspiration and is now facing the prospect of being without their injured superstar for at least their next Euro 2024 game against the Netherlands on Friday.

Captain Mbappe is recovering from a broken nose suffered in Monday's 1-0 win over Austria in Duesseldorf in their opening match at the tournament. The new Real Madrid signing, who forced the own goal by Maximilian Woeber which decided the game, was badly hurt in a collision with Austrian defender Kevin Danso and had to be replaced by Olivier Giroud.

The French Football Federation later said Mbappe would not need an operation but did admit he would need to be fitted with a mask before he could return to action.

In any case, the lack of time between matches means the clash with the Dutch in Leipzig is set to come too soon for the 25-year-old.

And France coach Didier Deschamps will hope his team can get a positive result which could seal their last-16 place, meaning Mbappe might also be able to sit out the last Group D game against Poland without it being a problem.

But can Les Bleus beat a strong Netherlands side without arguably the world's most lethal striker?

"Of course, he is an important player, the captain, a leader. So that will have an impact, but we have an exceptional squad," midfielder Adrien Rabiot said on Wednesday.

"I am not going to complain given the lads we have on the bench. We have more than enough options to replace Kylian. I have total confidence in the guys on the bench and the quality we have." Mbappe is his country's third-top scorer of all time with 47 goals from 80 caps. —*AP*

PHOTO: PTI

Rahul Dravid loses cool over 97 Test questions

NORTH SOUND, 20 JUNE

India head coach Rahul Dravid was reminded of some bitter memories as he attended the press conference ahead of the T20 World Cup 2024 match against Afghanistan. Dravid, who took up the coaching job on the back of an astounding career with the Indian team, doesn't have the best of numbers behind him in Barbados as a player. As a reporter reminded him of his poor stats at the venue, the India head coach was visibly irked and lost his cool at the question. Dravid gave the reporter the complete gyan of his psyche, saying he is someone who moves on quickly and is only looking to do well as a coach, not thinking about his performances as a player in the past. Reporter: "Rahul, you as a player, you have played here. Not the best memories of the 97 Test?" Dravid: "Geez, thanks a lot buddy! I have had some other decent memories here as well." —*PTI*

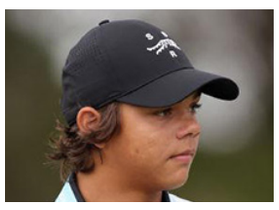


PHOTO: PTI

Tiger Woods' son, Charlie, qualifies for his first USGA

CORAL SPRINGS, 20 JUNE

Charlie Woods earned his way into his first USGA championship on Wednesday when the 15-year-old son of Tiger Woods had the leading score among qualifiers for the U.S. Junior Amateur next month at Oakland Hills. Charlie Woods recovered from a bogey-double bogey start at Eagle Trace Golf Club to finish with a 1-under 71 to be medalist from his qualifier, one of four players to qualify from the site. "I didn't play great my first two holes, but I played good for the last 16. I just told myself not to make any more bogeys or doubles and I took advantage of some nice birdie looks when I had them," Woods said.—*AP*

Alcaraz loses in Queen's second round

LONDON, 20 JUNE

Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz's buildup took a hit when he lost in the second round of Queen's Club on Thursday. Alcaraz, the defending Queen's champion and top seed, lost to Jack Draper 7-6 (3), 6-3.For Draper, the British No. 1, it was the biggest win of his career. He was impressively composed in front of his home crowd.Queen's was Alcaraz's only grass-court preparation last year.—*AP*

Jovic, Milan super-sub who rescued Serbia

MUNICH, 20 JUNE

Milan have just renewed their contract with Luka Jovic and the striker celebrated by showing for Serbia in EURO 2024 why he is a valuable super-sub.

The games in the early slot at Euro 2024 have generally provided sensational entertainment so far. It took a fair while for the Group C encounter between Slovenia and Serbia in Munich today (Thursday) to ignite, but it eventually delivered the now-customary drama. Žan Karnicnik's 69th-minute goal put Slovenia on the brink of a historic win until substitute Luka Jovic leveled deep in stoppage time.

The goal sent the Serbia fans into raucous joy but also saw them throw flares and other objects onto the field.

The equalizer was virtually the last action as the referee blew full-time immediately after the players restarted. The Slovenia players collapsed to the ground in disappointment.

It also would have been their first win in a major tournament since victory over Algeria in the 2010 World Cup. —*AP*

Luka Jovic **PHOTO: X/@EURO2024**

Salt hammered an unbeaten 87 **PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP**

England flex all-round game to down WI

GROS ISLET, 20 JUNE

Defending champions England signaled their credentials for a third title with a dominant display in St Lucia, where they downed fellow two-time winners West Indies by eight wickets in the teams' first Super 8 contest.

Jos Buttler's side first restricted a power-packed line-up to 180 on the tournament's best batting surface so far and then mowed down that score with 15 balls to spare courtesy of a blazing knock from Phil Salt, who continued to enjoy batting in and against the West Indies. After scoring two tons in a five-match series late last year, Salt finished with an unbeaten 87 tonight, an assault that included a 30-run takedown of a Romario Shepherd over.Salt played a major hand in the win here, racing his way to an unbeaten 87 off 47 balls as the defending champions replied to the home team's 180/4 with 181/2 in 17.3 overs.

"It's been a very stop-start (tournament) for us. We had a hiccup against Australia and then, the rain out against Scotland. It didn't feel like we played much cricket up to this point," Salt said in the post-match press meet.

—*PTI*

T20 WC: Aus needs all-round effort to beat B'desh

NORTH SOUND, 20 JUNE

It's a mismatch on paper but title-favourites Australia would be wary of slipping on the proverbial banana peel that Bangladesh can be when the two teams clash in their Super Eight, Group 1, match of the T20 World Cup here on Friday.

Australia, champions of the 2021 edition of the tournament, will be mindful of the dangers of taking Bangladesh lightly.

The supremely confident team from Down Under was humbled 1-4 by the South Asians in a T20 International series in 2021, and any laxity can be severely punished in conditions here that have a close resemblance to the sub-continent.

From an Australian perspective, it might bring increased onus on leg-spinner Adam Zampa and part-timers such as Glenn Maxwell and Travis Head.

Keeping in mind the inherent slowness of the pitch here, the Aussies might also mull retaining left-arm spinner Ashton Agar, who is a handy bat too, from their last group match against Scotland.

Cummins and Hazlewood are set to return for this match after sitting out of the Scotland game.

Australia will take on Bangladesh and England on South African **PHOTO: X / @T20WORLDCUP**

The Aussies have also received a boost as captain Mitchell Marsh has declared himself fit to bowl in the Super Eight stage.

"I'll be available to bowl. With the line-up that we've got, I don't necessarily see a need for me to bowl.

match starts at 6 AM IST

England batters look to tame strong South African bowling

If their authoritative win against the West Indies is a sign, England batters seemed to have found their cloak of invincibility at the right time. They will see an encore against a formidable South African bowling unit in a Group-2 match of the T20 World Cup Super 8s on Friday.

England were at their menacing best against the Windies while handing them a crushing eight-wicket defeat here that has also fired them to the top of the group through a better Net Run Rate -- +1.34 against SA's +0.90.

That the winner here will have one foot in the semifinals of this ICC showpiece will come as an additional motivation.

South Africa, on the other hand, suffered a scare from the USA before they squeezed out an 18-run win in their Super Eight opener.

English opener Phil Salt showed why he is the No. 2 T20I batter in the world when he steered a tricky 181-run chase, mixing caution and aggression en route to an unbeaten 87.

Salt would once again look to give England an explosive start along with his skipper Jos Buttler, who will be eyeing some runs under his belt.

Buttler, who scored a 42 in their loss to Australia in the group stage, has not been able to convert his starts with just 91 runs from four innings.

The return to form of Jonny Bairstow, who struck a crucial 48 not out against the West Indies, will also be a big boost for England.

The challenge for the likes of Kagiso Rabada and Keshav Maharaj will be to prevent the England batters from running away with the match.

Match starts at 8 pm IST

—*PTI*

Anvitha picks title on her 2nd pro start at WPGT

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Anvitha Narender, who held at least a share of the lead from the opening round, completed a comprehensive seven-shot win in the eighth leg of the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour at the Bangalore Golf Club here on Thursday. In only her second professional tournament, the New Jersey-born golfer, who was T-8 on her debut a week earlier, shot three fine rounds in the 60s for 69-65-68 to total 8-under 202 and beat amateur Lavanya Jadon, who had a rough start but held on for a round of 73 and finished second at 1-under 209. Vidhatri Urs, who like Anvitha is playing only her second pro event, shot the day's equal best of 68 despite a finish that had a double-bogey and a bogey at the end. Vidhatri, who was T-3 last week, finished third time at even par 210 with cards of 72-70-68.

Anvitha Narender **PHOTO: PTI**

—*PTI*

Hockey India names 27 core probables

BENGALURU, 20 JUNE

Hockey India on Thursday decided to keep faith in its proven performers while announcing a 27-strong list of men's team core probables for a pre-Olympic national camp which will be conducted from 21 June to 8 July at the SAI center here.

India is placed in a tough Pool B in the Olympics alongside Belgium, Argentina, New Zealand, Australia, and Ireland. The Tokyo Games bronze-winners will start their Olympic campaign against New Zealand on 27 July. The Indian team is returning to the national camp after a successful outing in the FIH Hockey Pro League, where it currently occupies the fourth spot after earning 24 points from 16 matches.

PHOTO: X / @HOCKEYINDIA

The core group includes goalkeepers Krishan Bahadur Pathak, PR Sreejesh, Suraj Karkera, and defenders Harmanpreet Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Jugraj Singh, Sanjay, and Amir Ali.

—*PTI*

BIG FAN OF JASPRIT BUMRAH

Bumrah has to play Test cricket: Ambrose

DUBAI, 20 JUNE

Former West Indies seamer and legend Curtly Ambrose believes too much cricket is being played at the moment. And the longest format is 'real cricket'(Test cricket match) even as T20 leagues mushroom all over the globe.

"I've always preferred Test match cricket over anything else. I've played ODIs, I've played four-day cricket, but for me, it isn't international cricket. Test match cricket for me is real cricket.

Curtly Ambrose is a huge fan of Jasprit Bumrah and despite the Indian spearhead's struggles with stress fractures in the past, the Caribbean legend would not want to change anything in his unorthodox action as he feels every fast bowler takes the field with a risk of getting injured.

Curtly Ambrose; (Inset) Jasprit Bumrah **PHOTO: @CURTLYAMBROSE_**

Bumrah, arguably the best all-format pacer in the game right now, has had his fair share of back problems and underwent surgery in March last year. After a long rehab, Bumrah made a comeback ahead of the ODI World Cup in India in November and he has not looked back since then.

The 30-year-old can get wickets in a T20 at any stage of the game and in the longest format, he can strike with both the new and the old ball, more so when it is reversing.

- Former West Indies seamer and legend Curtly Ambrose believes too much cricket is being played at the moment. And the longest format is 'real cricket'(Test cricket match) even as T20 leagues mushroom all over the globe.

In a telephonic interview with PTI, Ambrose said Bumrah should not change a thing unless he sustains a serious injury."What I can tell you something about Jasprit Bumrah, I'm a big fan. Right from ever since I saw him the first time. —*PTI*

Indian rower Panwar to leave for Paris

KOLKATA, 20 JUNE

Competing in the high-endurance men's singles sculls rowing event at the Olympics can be tough, but Balraj Panwar, India's only qualifier for the Paris Games, hopes to make it count by training there for 20 days.

Panwar will be among the first batch of athletes to reach Paris to acclimatize themselves to the conditions.

"We are going there 20 days in advance and I'm sure it won't feel 'strange'. It will help us acclimatize to the weather and be ready," Panwar said in a virtual media interaction organized jointly by SAI, IOA, and the Rowing Federation of India.

Indian doubles sculls rower Salman Khan will be his training partner and will set the pace for him during training at a club in France before the actual competition.

Balraj Panwar **PHOTO: @PANWARBALRAJ**

"You are alone in the waters in men's singles sculls and there is a lot of mental as well as physical training needed. With Salman in training, I hope to get myself ready fully before the big event." —*PTI*